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General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

14th plenary meeting
Thursday, 22 September 2016, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Zamora Rivas (El Salvador), Vice-President, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Address by Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cameroon.

Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Biya (*spoke in French*): Cameroon wishes to congratulate Mr. Thomson on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. His great experience at the national and international levels, and in the public and private sectors, and his well-known personal qualities augur well for the success of our work. I would like in that regard to assure him of the support of my country and the full cooperation of our delegation. I would also like to recognize the work accomplished by his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, whose term of office was characterized by successful initiatives to make the United Nations more open and transparent.

Finally, I would like to pay special tribute to Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his remarkable accomplishments during his two terms in a particularly difficult international context. Cameroon, for its part, was honoured by his memorable visit in 2010. It welcomes the strengthening during his term of our exceptional bonds of excellent cooperation with the United Nations.

This session opens at a time of turmoil in which, fortunately, we see some glimmers of hope. In a spirit of human solidarity, we have in recent years laid the foundations for a common destiny for humankind. I am particularly referring to the document significantly entitled "The future we want", adopted at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 (resolution 66/288, annex). I would also refer to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Finally, I must mention the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, prepared at the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

In that context, my country welcomes the President's decision to place his term under the banner of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We therefore welcome the convening of this debate on the Sustainable Development Goals, nine months after their adoption and entry into force. The SDGs, it should be recalled, constitute the first global agenda to consider the issue of development in all its dimensions — security, economic, social, human and environmental.

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The originality of the 2030 Agenda clearly lies in the fact that it transcends the conventional indicators of economic growth. It truly focuses on human progress, humanity's heritage, the common well-being and security for all. It is an ambitious Agenda that requires everyone's genuine involvement. Under the Agenda, our common goal is to eradicate poverty and to leave no one behind. That is a challenge that we have set for ourselves and that we must assume in solidarity in order to meet the expectations of our peoples and take the summons of history to heart.

As everyone knows, we have in the past adopted agendas, declarations and action programmes that have raised great hopes around the world among young people, women and men, both urban and rural. They were harbingers of a new world of peace and shared prosperity. Yet the adopted actions were only partially implemented, a situation that we regretted at the time. In this Hall, we have failed to honour all our commitments, especially the financial ones. We have not fulfilled all the hopes and aspirations of our peoples.

Today, we need to get organized so as to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals fare better. Since the goal is to transform our world and leave no one behind, we must find the wherewithal to realize our ambitions, which fall into three categories. First, there is the political: our political will must be constant and not wax and wane according to circumstances. Secondly, in the financial category, our contributions should be effective, certain and adequate. That will require unprecedented mobilization. Lastly, from a moral perspective, the principle of the duty of solidarity among peoples should be reaffirmed and observed. In doing so, we will be helping the SDGs to accelerate the advent of a world of peace for everyone everywhere — a world of prosperity for all.

As the Assembly knows, it is no longer time for promises. It is time for commitment; time for action. Our efforts will encounter various obstacles, including persistent conflicts and increasing terrorism. My country is in a position to talk about that, having been engaged over the past three years in a veritable war against the scourge of terrorism. That new type of threat to peace and development requires, I repeat, a collective response, collective determination and collective action. Goal 16 of the Agenda for Sustainable Development, which focuses on the promotion and the advent of peaceful and inclusive societies should, in our case, help us to effectively fight Boko Haram. As underscored by one of the targets of that Goal, we should

> "strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime".

Cameroon wishes to thank the President for having invited us, along with the other States Members of the United Nations, to today's debate on the implementation of the SDGs, the new universal push to transform the world. The outcomes of previous agendas and programmes have shown us the urgent need to find the wherewithal to achieve our ambitions. If we decide, here and now, to effectively and tangibly mobilize our immense resources and if we decide to devote them to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, then the SDGs will truly become the push to transform today's world into a world of peace and shared prosperity.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cameroon for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Anastasiades: It is a great honour to address the Assembly once again. I would like to start by joining the previous speakers in conveying my Government's congratulations to Ambassador Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

Last year, we, the leaders of the international community, came together in the realization that, in an increasingly interdependent world, all of our actions are, more than ever before, closely connected and impact one another. We therefore collectively pledged to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, so as to transform our world for the benefit of humankind. The universal, comprehensive and indivisible 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents a common reference point for all of us and our guiding tool as we attempt to effectively tackle the universal challenges that transcend boundaries and threaten regional and international cohesion.

Challenges such as poverty, hunger, child mortality, social and economic inequality, lack of adequate health standards and educational opportunities have, in turn, aggravated worrying phenomena such as religious fundamentalism, sectarianism, terrorism, civil war and ethnic conflicts. The combination of all those factors has resulted in the extraordinary humanitarian crisis we are witnessing in the forcible displacement of millions of people, with the consequent unprecedented wave of refugees and migration flows that we are all witnessing, some of us at our doorstep. In that regard, it goes without saying that, in order to reverse such disturbing developments and establish more prosperous, just and peaceful societies, we need to address collectively and in an effective manner the root causes that have led to the uncontrolled exacerbation of those flows, through a two-fold interrelated approach.

First, by directing and concentrating our efforts so as to finally make sustainable development possible in all of the countries and regions in need. That can be achieved only if we adopt a targeted and results-oriented approach towards development cooperation, which will create the political and socioeconomic conditions needed for institution-building, stability and economic growth by, inter alia, eliminating inequality and social exclusion, addressing gender inequality and combating gender-based violence, facilitating investment in human capital via capacity development and education, especially by promoting girls' education, strengthening the role of key productive sectors, such as agriculture, energy and health, building resilience and fostering full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and enhancing good governance and promoting the rule of law, as well as combating corruption.

Secondly, we need to resourcefully confront the threats posed by ongoing conflicts, as well as prevent future ones, in order to achieve lasting and viable political solutions that will promote regional peace, security and predictability. To that end, I wish to recall that the current session of the General Assembly was preceded by the High-level Meeting on large movements of refugees and migrants, during which we confirmed our shared responsibility to collectively address the issue of enforced human displacement. In parallel, all of us should direct our efforts, in an inclusive way, to combat human traffickers and the enablers of terrorism. Given that in today's globalized world, all of us, even if in different contexts and to varying degrees, inevitably face some or all of those challenges, meaningful and effective multilateralism should be reinforced. That is critical. To that end, we should reconsider the prevention and conflict-resolution mechanisms at our disposal, with a view to making them more efficient, effective and immediate.

That can be achieved only by strengthening our support for and commitment to the United Nations, which is the only international forum that was established by all of us with the aim of cooperatively resolving regional and international threats to peace and security. Otherwise, we run the risk of an indefinite perpetuation of the current humanitarian crisis and ongoing conflicts, which would serve the best interests of their perpetrators at the expense of our universal principles.

As his 10-year tenure is coming to an end, I wish to convey both my Government's and my personal appreciation to Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General, for his service in the promotion of our common values, and for his hard work and accomplishments. In particular, I wish to commend him for his instrumental role in getting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted, for his work on the recent agreement on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and, of course, for bringing the United Nations Conference on climate change to a successful conclusion through the Paris Agreement. It is an agreement that Cyprus is committed to ratifying by the end of the year. Moreover, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his active role in achieving a peaceful and comprehensive settlement on long-standing international issues, including the Cyprus problem — a problem that, sadly, is the second-longest-standing unresolved international issue on the United Nations agenda.

Following the tragic events of 1974 and Turkey's invasion, the continuing military occupation of more than a third of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus and, at the same time, the forced displacement of approximately 40 per cent of the population, the Greek Cypriot side, in a spirit of compromise, accepted the transformation of the unitary State into a federal one. Since then, a plethora of Security Council resolutions have reaffirmed the basis of the settlement as a bicommunal, bizonal federation with political equality, as well as the high-level agreements, with a single international legal personality, a single sovereignty and a single citizenship. At the same time, successive leaders of the two communities have engaged unsuccessfully so far in numerous rounds of talks.

Following my election in 2013, a renewed effort at negotiation on 11 February 2014 led to the adoption of the Joint Declaration by the leaders of the two communities and the resumption of the negotiating process. On the one hand, the Joint Declaration encapsulates the following fundamental principles: the reaffirmation of the basis of the settlement; Cyprus' continued membership in the United Nations and the European Union (EU); the values upon which the EU is founded shall be safeguarded throughout the island, with full respect for democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms; and union, in whole or in part, with any other country or any form of partition or secession or any other unilateral change to the state of affairs shall be prohibited.

On the other hand, it established the methodology of the talks. All chapters would be discussed interdependently. The process would be led by the leaders, and only an agreement freely reached by them might be put to simultaneous referenda. Any kind of arbitration would, therefore, be excluded. Nothing would be considered as agreed until everything is agreed. The leaders would aim to reach a settlement as soon as possible, without any enforced or artificial timelines. Thus, both communities have agreed on the overarching rules and modalities that are to guide the negotiating process. That has enabled the two leaders to have a clear and shared understanding on the framework of the envisaged settlement and on the ways and means of achieving it.

Last year, following the change in the leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community, I spoke of my revived hope that the new round of negotiations would end the unacceptable status quo. This year, following a series of frequent meetings between the two leaders, I have the pleasure of informing the Assembly that progress has been achieved on the important aspects of the Cyprus problem, confirming, inter alia, that United Cyprus will have a single international legal personality, a single sovereignty and a single citizenship, thereby guaranteeing, for all Cypriots, the freedom of movement and the right to acquire property, reside, practise a trade or profession and establish and operate a business or engage in any economic activity throughout Cyprus; full respect for the individual's right to property; ensuring that the demographic character of the island on the first day of the settlement will reflect, with a slight deviation, the traditional demographic composition of the Republic of Cyprus as established in 1960; ensuring that the said demographic composition will not be altered by outside influences; the implementation of the EU acquis throughout the territory of Cyprus, without deviations or permanent derogations; and protecting the bizonal and bicommunal character of the settlement through specific clauses.

As agreed by the two leaders, the federal Constitution shall prescribe that the United Cyprus Federation shall be composed of two constituent States of equal status, establishing the mode in which political equality will be exercised, including the effective participation in decision-making at the federal level. I must admit that further convergence has been reached on most aspects in the chapters on governance, economy and the European Union to the benefit of all Turkish and Greek Cypriots. At the same time, what is also encouraging is that, in contrast to previous negotiations, discussions in the form of brainstorming have, for the first time, commenced in relation to the chapters on territorial readjustments and security.

I do not wish to overlook the significant progress that has been achieved; however, I feel obliged to stress that differences remain on a number of issues regarding the chapters on governance, the EU and the economy. But the most significant divergences lie in the core and fundamental chapters on property, territory, and security and guarantees, which will significantly impact whether a solution could be feasible in the very near future.

My aim is to avoid the failures of the past and to present to the people a clear and well-prepared settlement with no interpretive or other ambiguities and deficiencies, ensuring that the solution will be politically and economically viable, functional and lasting. In that

respect, we need to address the financial dimension of the settlement, including costs related to the property issue and the institutional functioning of the Federal State; the safeguarding of the smooth implementation of the agreement; the first day of the solution and what it would entail; the introduction of the euro as legal tender on day one of the settlement; and, one of the most important issues, the speedy implementation of the various aspects of the agreement, among others.

I wish to reiterate yet again my resolve to continue working with the same determination and intensive pace, in order to reach a solution as soon as possible, hopefully, by the end of the year. I believe that this ambitious goal is achievable, provided that all interested parties and stakeholders show a similar degree of commitment, engage constructively and proceed with concrete and tangible steps that positively reinforce the negotiating process.

We need a solution that will reunite our country, its people, the economy and our institutions; create a win-win situation for all Cypriots — we do not want to create winners or leave behind losers; address the expectations, sensitivities and concerns of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots; ensure the building of a modern EU and United Nations Member State, enjoying full sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity; restore and fully respect the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all its citizens; establish Cyprus as an international paradigm of peaceful coexistence and prosperous collaboration between all of its citizens, irrespective of their different ethnic, cultural and religious diversity; and rid Cyprus of third-country military troops and guarantees, an anachronism in today's world.

It is my firm belief that the solution of the problem in Cyprus would, first and foremost, be to the benefit of all Cypriots, by creating conditions of peace, prosperity and a flourishing society, and unlocking the country's full potential for future generations. Regionally, it would turn Cyprus into a model country of stability and predictability, and would broaden the role of Cyprus as a security-provider in one of the most turbulent areas of the world. At the European level, it would end the oxymoron of one of its Member States being divided, while it would also positively reinforce relations between the European Union and Turkey, as well as strengthen the rest of the security architecture of the EU. Last but not least, solving an international problem that has been on the agenda of the United Nations for the past several decades will offer a beacon of hope, showing that even the most intractable problems can be solved peacefully through the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Koroma: I congratulate the President on his election, and I commend his predecessor for his effective leadership at the previous session.

Let me also, on behalf of the Government and the people of Sierra Leone, applaud His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his dedication and commitment to the advancement of global peace and development during his 10 years of service to our Organization as Secretary-General. I commend him for his vision and initiatives, including the major high-level panel reviews, the historic adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the signing of the Paris Agreement on climate change and convening the first World Humanitarian Summit. We in Sierra Leone will always remember the Secretary-General with deep appreciation for his exemplary role in mobilizing support for the successful fight against the deadly Ebola disease.

The theme chosen by the President for our debate this year, "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", could not have been more thoughtful. In order to achieve that goal, we must universally promote the Sustainable Development

Goals. We must push forward with energy, compassion and resolve to save the millions of women and children still trapped in poverty, bring peace to our troubled region, and prevent and contain disease outbreaks.

In Sierra Leone, drawing on the lessons learned from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, we have taken action to quickly integrate the SDGs into our national development planning processes by linking each of the 17 Goals and 169 targets to our national development programme — the Agenda for Prosperity. Sierra Leone was one of the 22 countries reviewed during the Economic and Social Council's High-Level Political Forum in July. We shared our views on how we want to implement the SDGs, on the challenges we foresee and on how we hope to overcome them. At the same time, we have formulated a national integrated results framework that aligns the SDGs with our Alliance for Prosperity monitoring and evaluation mechanism. We have also established an international benchmarks system for Sierra Leone, which will enable us to address the challenges involved in obtaining the reliable statistical data we need in order to report on our progress.

But whatever we do at the national level, whatever efforts we make on the global stage, whatever projects the brightest among us design, we will not be able to deliver on the SDGs' promise of an inclusive, fairer and better world without the reform of the United Nations. Let me be blunt. Our premier global institution lacks the democratic characteristics needed to tackle the development, security and other challenges facing Africa and many other parts of the world. Without strong African voices at the highest level of our premier global decision-making body, without the energetic voices of the region that is home to the world's largest number of young people, and without the decisive contribution of the continent that is most affected by Security Council decisions, no solution that the United Nations might propose to our challenges can be sustainable, inclusive or lasting.

Yes, Africa's position is about righting historical wrongs and enhancing its voice in the United Nations. But most of all, Africa's position relates to our contribution to making the United Nations more effective, democratic and forward-looking. That is why we believe that the dilution of any of its key elements is akin to continuing a status quo that is unfair, unjust, non-inclusive and unfit for the requirements of the twenty-first century. Africa has asked me, as Coordinator of its African Union Committee of Ten Heads of State on United Nations Reforms, to tell the world that we will stand united behind the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration. At the African Union's July summit in Kigali we reaffirmed the African position, and we deplore any attempts to weaken any of those positions through divide-and-rule policies that are reminiscent of the colonial era.

In September last year at the Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping, we committed to enlarging and modernizing United Nations peacekeeping operations. I made a pledge at the Summit to contribute further to United Nations peacekeeping with commitments to provide two formed police units, special weapons and tactics units and police guards to the United Nations Stand-by Arrangements System, and we are now ready to deploy at short notice.

Sierra Leone welcomes the Secretary-General's report prepared for the World Humanitarian Summit (A/70/709) and its annex, the Agenda for Humanity. This year's World Humanitarian Summit was a turning point at which we collectively pledged to improve our response to people caught in natural disasters and conflicts, empower them as agents of their own recovery and summon greater political will for preventing and ending the wars that have caused so much suffering. Millions of people need humanitarian help, and millions more have been forcibly displaced from their homes. We must set the right tone in addressing the lingering challenges facing our world. My delegation endorses the Assembly's adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1) and fully subscribes to its call to address the root causes of the problem, including efforts aimed at preventing crisis situations before they erupt.

Sierra Leone also welcomes the simultaneous adoptions in April by the Security Council of its resolution 2282 (2016) on post-conflict peacebuilding, and by the General Assembly of its resolution 70/262, reviewing the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. The parallel resolutions demonstrate our commitment to take a comprehensive approach to transitional justice and to accountability in the security sector, both of which are critical to consolidating peace, reducing poverty and preventing countries from relapsing into conflict.

In Sierra Leone, our commitment to continue to address the key underlying causes of fragility and the

drivers of conflict is underlined by our participation as a pilot country in the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States. As the current Chair of the Group of Seven Fragile States Plus, Sierra Leone emphasizes the importance of incorporating SDG 16 into our efforts. We also recognize that the effective management of our natural resources is central to ensuring sustainable socioeconomic development and a resilient future for Sierra Leoneans.

My Government remains committed to good governance and will continue to build on our post-conflict peacebuilding and democratic gains by further strengthening our democratic institutions and by providing access to the justice sector and establishing a level playing field there. To that end, we have taken steps to improve the conditions of service in our justice sector in order to attract and deploy more qualified personnel to the bench and as state counsels in every region and district of Sierra Leone. We have established a legal-aid board so as to ensure that every indigent person has legal representation, that no one enters our correctional institutions without an indictment, and that court cases are speedily heard and justice is fairly served. Those strides represent important contributions to our journey towards attaining a resilient and inclusive Sierra Leone. They remain the bedrock of our aspirations to become a middle-income country by 2035.

That is why we have hastened to put in place major relevant policy decisions and enacted appropriate legislation to empower women, improve the situation of youth and ensure that the physically challenged are not marginalized. My Government's vision for the empowerment of women as enshrined in pillar 8 of our Agenda for Prosperity is consistent with global aspirations, in recognition of the crucial importance of women and gender parity in our development process. Most of my Government's programmes are youth-oriented and range from education to health, community development and employment.

Efforts to address youth empowerment and unemployment remain at the heart of our Agenda for Prosperity. My Government has also made a record number of appointments of youths and women into top-level decision-making positions, including ministerial, ambassadorial and leadership posts in Government departments and agencies and in the military, police, Parliament, the judiciary and local government.

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa shone a spotlight on the critical need for the world to have a more robust and effective global health architecture, with strong and accountable leadership to deal with health crises, including pandemics. In this context, my delegation commends the High-Level Panel on the Global Response to Health Crises for its comprehensive report. We strongly consider its 27 recommendations as the way forward for appropriate action at the national, regional and international levels. We must collectively commit ourselves to the full implementation of the Panel's recommendations in order to protect humankind from the scourge of future health crises.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Sierra Leone, let me express our appreciation to the international community for supporting us in our efforts to defeat the Ebola virus. We are now implementing our post-Ebola recovery programme. We applaud the support that we have received, but we still face enormous resource gaps. I would therefore like to remind our bilateral friends and the international community to fulfil their pledges to our recovery programme.

Though we contribute almost nothing to global warming, Sierra Leone is the third most vulnerable country to the effects of climate change. Dealing with climate change is therefore an urgent life-and-death matter for us. That is why we welcome the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and we will implement its provisions in Sierra Leone. My Government, in collaboration with our development partners, is implementing projects on adaptation, including climate information and early-warning systems. We remain committed to these efforts, and we seek further collaboration in confronting this global threat against humankind.

As we move into the implementation of the first phase of the SDGs, we must remember that fragile States were unable to make remarkable progress in the implementation of the MDGs largely owing to the absence of peace, justice and effective State institutions. It is therefore urgent for all parties to cooperate with global initiatives in finding enduring peace in Syria, South Sudan and Libya. This is why the world must accelerate its efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in fighting terrorism and in stemming the dangerous escalation in the arms race.

We cannot sustain this world with bombs and the unending threat of war. We cannot achieve a universal

push towards development when armed conflicts continue to drive millions into refugee camps and when millions find themselves trapped between warring factions. We cannot champion the cause of justice and legitimacy when Africa remains excluded from and underrepresented in the highest decision-making organ of our global Organization. The reforms must start here, and they must be deliberate and enduring.

While we acknowledge the gradual progress made so far, particularly in the transparent process of selecting and appointing the next Secretary-General, let me again reiterate that African Member States are unhappy about the slow pace of Security Council reform.

In concluding, let me once again reiterate Africa's strong concern over the continuous failure of the United Nations to adopt measures, including text-based negotiations, that will lead to a comprehensive and early reform of the Security Council to reflect contemporary realities. I would therefore urge that the reform process move faster so that Africa can take its rightful place in the Security Council. The United Nations must change with the times and must do so by effecting the relevant reforms.

Redressing the much-acknowledged historical injustice done to the continent will be a remarkable step in our universal push to transform our world. We cannot effectively deal with the evolving challenges of our time if we continue to hold on to the edicts and structures established 71 years ago. Equitable geographical representation, with the attendant privileges in the membership of the Security Council, will only make it more legitimate, representative, effective, transparent and accountable.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Grybauskaitė (Lithuania): This year we agreed that the general debate would aim to give a universal push to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I would like to focus on the particularly important Sustainable Development Goal 5 — on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls — because today's greatest challenges, from climate change to fighting terrorism to ending the world's deadliest conflicts, can be resolved only with the full participation of both genders, especially women. Further, the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals will require that we dedicate special attention to women, because they are the ones who feel the greatest impacts and are most likely to be left behind and ignored. Let us look at some of the other Sustainable Development Goals to see the truth of this assertion.

First, with respect to Goal 1 — ending poverty — both women and men are affected, but lifting women out of poverty is much more difficult. As if poverty were not hard enough, women also face gender-based discrimination, stereotyping and social marginalization. According to one UN-Women report, around the world, a woman earns approximately 24 per cent less than a man, finds it more difficult to get a loan to start a business, and is likely to receive a smaller inheritance or nothing if she decides to leave her husband. The trend towards the feminization of poverty has to be changed. By not allowing women to prosper, we condemn entire families and all of society.

Secondly, with respect to Goal 2 — ending hunger — although around half of the world's agricultural work is done by women, when food runs out women are the first to suffer. When public order breaks down, a woman's trip to bring her family food or water may easily cause her to lose her life. In times of hunger, women give the little food they have to their families and children. In a bread line, however, they often end up being pushed aside or abused. Empowering women by expanding land ownership or providing credit would

not only feed a family, but would also raise female incomes and make more food available for all.

Thirdly, with respect to Goal 4 — providing education — for so many girls and women around the world, following the road to inclusive learning and education remains an impossible task. According to the United Nations *Global Sustainable Development Report*, out of the world's 750 million illiterate adults, two thirds are women. Girls are sent off or sold into early marriages, which blocks their path to education, higher income and independence. Criminals abduct women and sell them into slavery. Extremists burn down schools and kill teachers because they do not want educated girls to make their own decisions or make their own life choices.

Naturally, that needs to change. Education is a key that opens many doors. Educated women are a tremendous resource and a force for the common good for all of us. Women must be free to have access to education and choose the profession they want. Information technologies must be available to uncover their full potential.

The task ahead of us is immense. However, it can be achieved if each of us finds the strength and courage to become part of the change by encouraging women to dream big and demand their rightful place in national parliaments, in politics, at negotiating tables, in science labs and on company boards; by ensuring that nothing can stand in the way of a girl's dream to receive a free high-quality education; by combating gender stereotypes and abusive social practices; and by making sure that life and laws give women and girls the equal voice and power that they deserve.

There is a new perspective to consider today. If we reduce the cost of gender-based violence today we can save the world about 2 per cent of lost gross national product. If this money were not lost, it could be directed into poverty reduction and development. It is an additional development resource for the world. We cannot afford to fail in this challenge. It is too costly to allow gender-based violence to exist. To this end, we need everyone on board because only if all members of society — both women and men — are fully represented and engaged can the world's future be truly sustainable. Indeed, without it we cannot think at all about sustainable development in the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Lithuania for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Salvador Sánchez Cerén, President of the Republic of El Salvador

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mr. Salvador Sánchez Cerén, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Salvador Sánchez Cerén, President of the Republic of El Salvador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sánchez Cerén (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to affirm El Salvador's highest and most decisive commitment to meeting and endorsing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals at the international level in order to make our country and the world a better place for its inhabitants.

Nine months ago, El Salvador became the first country in the world to sign a ground-breaking agreement with the United Nations system for long-term cooperation on the accelerated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 15 nations around the world. Our objective, as partners in this ambitious initiative, is to make sustainable our country's efforts aimed at fulfilling the Agenda.

Taking into account the deadline to achieve the SDGs, we have accordingly developed strategies in our five-year development plan, entitled "El Salvador: productive, educated and safe". Within the framework of that joint effort with the United Nations, it is essential to empower a diversity of actors in the implementation process. To that end, we are establishing the National Council for Sustainable Development, a joint mechanism between Government and civil society charged with consulting, arranging and coordinating implementation of the SDGs at the national level.

In El Salvador, we are convinced that the Sustainable Development Goals must become an agenda for society. They must become a vision and shared programme between Government, citizens, social organizations, churches, business people, universities and other pillars of society. Of course, we in the Government are the first who are called upon to show progress in implementing the Agenda. We are therefore working towards increasing the productive capacity of our country through creating an environment for greater private and public investment, supporting micro-, small and medium enterprises, raising the quality of education, and implementing special projects to support vulnerable groups, such as young people, women and rural populations, to create opportunities, employment and economic growth for them.

With regard to security, to achieve its goals and overcome its challenges, my Government is committed to reaching an agreement with all political parties, aimed positively at working together to resolve the short-term and tax problems that we are facing as a country. Furthermore, we are carrying out unprecedented efforts in the area of security, as we had set out to do a year ago when we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which states,

> "[s]ustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security; and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development" (*resolution 70/1, para. 35*).

In that context, I want to share with the Assembly the fact that the National Council on Citizen Security and Coexistence, involving all social and political sectors and stakeholders in the country, is moving forward with the implementation of the Plan for a Safe El Salvador in order to take steps to reduce all forms of violence and activities committed by criminal groups, such as gangs and traffickers in humans, weapons and drugs, which have brought so much suffering to our people. We have also undertaken extraordinary measures to prevent violence, which will be gradually expanded throughout the entire country once they have been implemented in priority municipalities. The actions carried out in the various aspects of the Plan for a Safe El Salvador has yielded results. Over the past five months, there has been an approximate 50 per cent reduction in homicides, as compared with the first three months of this year — although, of course, many challenges and difficulties lie ahead.

I wish to reiterate that the Government of El Salvador remains fully committed to ensuring and protecting human rights. The commitment to human rights, democracy, the separation of powers, respect for the mandates of every State body and its decisions, transparency and the fight against corruption are today, for the Government of El Salvador, the cornerstone of any action it undertakes.

I recall that my country promoted the recognition in resolution 70/1, adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, that migrants are a vulnerable group and that they incontrovertibly contribute to the economic development of the countries that receive them. El Salvador insists on the need for the international community and the organizations dealing with the immigration issue and defending the rights of migrants and human rights, in general, and in particular the United Nations, to meet the challenge with courage and guide the efforts of their agencies, funds and programmes to reinforce cooperation initiatives related to international migration in all its facets.

Migration is a multidimensional phenomenon. It is as old as the history of humankind. In the particular case of my country, we are aware of the factors that motivate many Salvadorans to emigrate. National and other regional initiatives, such as the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle, which we are implementing with Guatemala and Honduras, in cooperation with the United States of America, focus on key priorities, such as productive development, investment in human capital, security and the strengthening of institutions. As countries of origin, we are doing our part, but we also need the rights of our citizens in countries of transit and destination to be supported and, above all, ensured. In other words, only efforts aimed at improving the conditions within the communities of origin of migrant populations will change the situation in the medium and long term. As the Pope said in September last year, the wall is not a solution because it would only produce more hate.

There is no doubt that the maintenance of international peace and security is an absolute prerequisite for fulfilling the 2030 Agenda. It is therefore essential to reiterate that the threat to humankind posed by the continued existence of weapons of mass destruction is a cause for concern, and restate that their use or the threat of their use is a clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations and a crime against

humanity, constituting a clear violation of international law and international humanitarian law.

In addition, we note with concern the attempts made to destabilize progressive Governments in our region, including the removal during her term of the President elected by the people of Brazil. Such practices are not only an affront to the rule of law, but also seriously hamper democracy, peace and the development of nations. We therefore stand against such measures. We call upon the international community to remain vigilant with regard to such actions and stay the course.

In that context, I would like to express particular solidarity with President Nicolás Maduro Moros and the Venezuelan people, who, I trust, will find solutions through dialogue to the challenges facing them.

Similarly, our country firmly rejects any expression of intolerance, violence and terror by radical groups that are attacking the lives and the most fundamental rights of people — a phenomenon that has been striking various parts of the world over the past several years.

El Salvador, as a country that suffered from a civil war and the consequences of the Cold War, is particularly concerned about the conflict in Syria, which has been worsening and has had a disastrous impact on the country's entire social fabric, in particular for its children. It is crucial that the global leadership represented in this Hall, in particular from countries hosting refugees from the crisis, provide a coordinated and, above all, humane and united response for the families who are suffering from deracination, disease and the loss of their loved ones as a result of the war.

We also hope that the different sectors in Syria will, with the support of the international community and United Nations institutions, reach an agreement to put an end to the hostilities in its territory. We would also like to speak out for the other areas of the world, such as Palestine, Iraq and Libya, where it is urgent that conflicts be overcome and a stable peace achieved.

In the Americas, we have noted with satisfaction the progress made by Cuba and the United States in restoring their relations. However, we believe that this change will not bring the expected benefits to the people of both countries if the economic embargo is not brought to an end.

It is important to underscore the decisive role played by the United Nations in defending and promoting human rights worldwide, as well as in promoting international peace and security. That is why I want to thank the valuable support that the Organization has provided to El Salvador over the past 25 years, not only to improve the quality of life of Salvadorans, through the implementation of international cooperation programmes and projects, but also in other areas, such as strengthening democracy and the rule of law, inter alia. This shared vision came about thanks to the fact that El Salvador resolved the armed conflict of the 1980s through an intensive dialogue and negotiation process, which culminated in the signing of the Peace Agreement on 16 January 1992, for which we had the invaluable support of the United Nations.

Allow me to underscore the fact that this is not only a historic milestone for El Salvador, but also a successful example of the workings of the United Nations system and can serve as a reference for resolving other conflicts. Accordingly, El Salvador has expressed its willingness to share its experience, as it did in the case of Colombia, which recently signed its definitive pact for peace and is implementing the agreements reached. We recognize and congratulate Colombia on this achievement.

I wish to state that El Salvador is preparing to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Peace Agreement in January 2017. With the support of the United Nations, this will be an opportunity to once again strengthen the process of defining our national agenda which we have been working on with a view to deepening our goals. Looking ahead, El Salvador recognizes that the challenge of building a culture of peace goes hand in hand with a sustainable development agenda. As we see it, we cannot achieve sustainable development and democracy without peace, nor can we achieve peace without democracy and sustainable development.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of El Salvador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Salvador Sánchez Cerén, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rouhani (*spoke in Farsi; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, and I hope that the decisions and initiatives taken by the Assembly will play an effective role in resolving the problems that our world is currently facing.

Fifteen years have passed since the painful terrorist attack in this city, a disaster whose human dimensions moved the entire world. On that day, no one imagined that this occurrence would lead to larger disasters or result in a devastating war in the Middle East and the spread of insecurity across the globe. This war has sown the seeds of borderless terrorism everywhere on Earth. Today, the most pressing question as to why we are facing such a situation should be on the agenda of every international forum. We need to find out which approaches, policies and erroneous actions have paved the way for the spread of insecurity throughout the world and what the world will look like 15 years from now.

Security has become a global problem at a time when major Powers are mainly focusing on advancing different methods of repression and military intervention under the pretext of creating a secure environment for their citizens. The genesis of borderless violent extremism and terrorism could be attributed to the security strategies developed by major Powers in the past 15 years. The main lesson to be learned from the analysis of this trend is that security in one region at the cost of insecurity in others is not only impossible, but it also leads to greater insecurity everywhere. Terrorists have even gone as far as claiming to have established States in the Levant, Iraq and Libya. More unfortunately, they hide their nefarious intents behind religious literature, thereby turning a compassionate religion into an instrument of violence and terror by spreading extremist and takfiri propaganda, which is all too regrettable.

The century that began with terror and violence in New York should not continue with hostile competition and expanding conflicts in the Middle East. Today the discourse of hatred and violence in the Middle East and North Africa is spreading with astonishing speed. The region is caught in a web of the most savage and destructive of policies. Millions of Syrians are stranded in deserts or on high seas, and hundreds of thousands of them die a violent death. Iraqis of every ethnic group are concerned about their territorial integrity and the future of their homeland. The defenceless people of Yemen are subjected to daily aerial bombardments. Following decades of occupation and atrocities, Afghanistan has yet to be released from the grip of suffering, violence and terror. The oppressed Palestinians continue to be afflicted by the apartheid policies and atrocities set by the usurping Zionist regime.

Undoubtedly, if the region is to reverse the current dangerous trends and move towards development and stability, certain countries must stop bombing their neighbours and abandon their support for takfiri terrorist groups, while accepting responsibility and trying to compensate for past mistakes. If the Saudi Government is serious about its vision for development and regional security, it must cease and desist from the use of divisive policies, stop spreading hate ideology and refrain from trampling upon the rights of neighbours. It must accept its responsibility for the protection of the lives and dignity of pilgrims and construct relations with the nations in the region on the basis of mutual respect and accountability.

The future of our region rests on dealing with fundamental challenges, including security crises. Due to inefficiency and lack of Government legitimacy, we will not be able to combat criminal and terrorist networks without genuine democracy or a participatory approach at national and transnational levels. We believe that countries in our region can create a shared future on the basis of their common history and culture and by isolating terrorist groups. We should never again allow our region to run the risk of dismemberment, given the impact of what took place close to a century ago.

Iran's principled approach calls for constructive partnership with our neighbours, with a view to establishing an enduring order based on shared security and efforts aimed at enhancing the developments of countries in the region and mutually beneficial economic cooperation. In order to uproot violence in the region

there is no choice but to focus on promoting democracy, citizenship rights and economic development.

Iran opposes any kind of sectarianism and any attempt to promote religious divisions. For centuries, the Muslim people, be they Shiites or Sunnis, have lived and continue to live together in harmony and mutual respect. Attempts to turn religious dissimilarities into tense confrontations are rooted in the vested interests of certain countries, which are trying to hide their quests for power behind religious slogans. Iran considers it imperative to preserve the territorial integrity of States, keep national borders intact, enhance people's right to self-determination and uphold the principle of refraining from the threat or use of force. We also reiterate the need to use diplomacy in conflict resolution.

Despite today's difficulties, I have hope in tomorrow. I have no doubt that we can prevail through prudence and wisdom. The experience acquired through dialogue between Iran and the P5+1 and the fruition of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) are indicative of the success that we could achieve through moderation, constructive interaction and the promotion of dialogue. A long, complicated and unnecessary crisis was brought to an end by the adoption of a win-win approach. The deal confirmed the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme through the use of confidence-building mechanisms and entails the closure of the so-called possible military dimensions file and the reinstatement of Iran's right to develop a peaceful nuclear programme.

The deal also has put an end to unfounded concerns, leading to the removal of the brutal sanctions imposed against Iran. Beyond the nuclear file, however, the JCPOA holds important lessons the resolving complicated international problems. The deal is not only a political agreement; it also represents a creative approach and method for engaging in constructive interaction with a view to peacefully resolving crises and challenges. The lessons learned from the JCPOA will serve to improve international relations. We should never forget that these pressures, sanctions and illegal threats against the Iranian people, designed to fully dismantle Iran's enrichment programme, were all defeated. Today, the Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency have formally accepted Iran's peaceful nuclear programme.

The United States is fully aware that the JCPOA constitutes a recognized multilateral agreement and that any failure on the part of the United States in implementing it would constitute an wrongful act under international law, to which the international community would object. Any failure in the implementation of the JCPOA will further erode the credibility of the United States around the world.

Breaches in compliance with the JCPOA by the United States in the past several months represents an error that should be rectified forthwith. Unfortunately, such illegal actions are not unprecedented. The latest example of this is the recent United States Supreme Court ruling which affirmed the legality of the seizure of billions of dollars in assets belonging to the Iranian people. This experience demonstrates that Zionist pressure groups could go so far as to persuade the United States Congress to pass indefensible legislation that forces the highest American judicial institution to violate peremptory norms of international law.

With God's help, the Iranian people's fortitude and the increased participation of Iran's partners from various regions around the world, and only eight months after the lifting of the cruel nuclear-related sanctions against my country, the economy of Iran, as the safest and most profitable destination for investment in our region, is showing clear improvement. Iran's economic growth rate surpassed 4 per cent in the spring of 2016, the inflation rate dropped to single digits, and Iran has come close to pre-sanction levels of oil production and exports. All in all, we are seeing greater development in the economic, scientific and technological sectors of the country.

Iran is one of the rare oil-producing countries that may be able to offset the shocking impact of the sharp slide in oil price in 2014. In order to attract investment, we are intent on strengthening economic stability and consistency through economic reforms and fiscal and financial discipline while preserving low rates of inflation. Economic growth is set to increase to around 5 per cent by the end of 2016. Based on all domestic and international predictions, Iran is currently enjoying one the highest growth rates among oil-producing countries.

In conclusion, I would like to clearly state that it is my deep belief that, despite setbacks, moderation will prevail over extremism, peace will triumph over violence, enlightenment will overcome ignorance and, finally, justice will conquer injustice. What is important is that we channel our beliefs, hopes and efforts towards realizing peace and justice. If we do so,

there is no doubt that the Almighty will assist all those who endeavour for peace, justice and moderation, and that God will help those who assist Him by defending his path, for the Lord is strong and mighty.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Madagascar.

Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana (*spoke in French*): At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Madagascar that I lead, I congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session and wish him every success in presiding over the work of the General Assembly during the current session. At the same time, we would like to convey our heartfelt appreciation to his predecessor.

By submitting, together with 21 other countries, a voluntary national review report in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Madagascar reaffirms and solidifies the political commitment it undertook when it signed on to the global mobilization last year which led to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Those objectives, which we all wanted to be universal, do not apply only to developing or poor countries, but rather to all countries, adjusted to local realities and development differentials, because a sustainable world can be built only upon an ecology-friendly transition in the North and responsible development in the South.

The hopes sparked by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are immense. Nevertheless, we must move from commitments to action and implementation. The major challenges are the redistribution of investments, improving social justice and translating international commitments into national strategies and political action. Human development, environmental protection and inclusive economies are the triptych that structures the SDGs. They align with our national development plan. In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, Madagascar is promoting social protection. This year, we formulated and implemented a national policy in that regard. By way of example, we provide income supplements for the poorest households to support the integration of children into the school system and to improve their nutrition through school cafeterias.

In addition to the social protection I just mentioned, health and education are sectors that we hold dear. Health is key for our country, as it is the best way to ensure the productivity of our people, both at school and in the workplace. That is why the draft universal health-coverage system was set up this year as part of our efforts to improve our public-health system. This policy will provide heath-care solutions for our people, especially the most vulnerable. Furthermore, the Government has committed itself to increasing vaccination coverage in Madagascar through a vaccination law. Other health-related efforts have been made with the United Nations in recent years, particularly in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In the education sector, we have been able to begin recruiting and training tens of thousands of teachers in an attempt to raise the school attendance rate, to help school dropouts go back to school and to improve the quality of our teaching.

Our young people, women and girls are the cornerstone of all of our public policies and development initiatives. Economic and social development, and, in particular, conditions for making the world more stable will be in vain if priority is not given to young people. From this rostrum, I call on all countries to collectively resolve to assist one another, in order to support development policies for young people. We need to create jobs for them, develop their talents and meet their legitimate aspirations to contribute to world peace and curb migration.

Protecting and empowering women and young girls, ensuring their equal rights and gender parity in development participation and respecting the rights of children and young people are at the heart of our concerns and our thinking. We will continue to reform our national plans and policies in order to promote equal access for women and men to economic resources and basic services. One notable achievement in Malagasy women's rights was the reform of the nationality code to allow children born to a Malagasy mother and a foreign father to acquire Malagasy citizenship through the maternal line, irrespective of the father's nationality. Similarly, in the interest of being all inclusive, the ratification of the international Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has allowed us to improve the protection offered to people with disabilities in Madagascar by implementing inclusive policies that safeguard their interests and allow them to effectively participate in development.

Sustainable Development Goal 2 seeks to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Our ambition is to modernize our agriculture sector to increase productivity and further develop organic farming. That would ensure food autonomy and accelerate the completion of the regional project of the Indian Ocean Commission to transform Madagascar into the breadbasket of the region. Programmes to combat food insecurity are part of our efforts to achieve the SDGs. Much of the south of the country is in the gripsof chronic drought, and the population living there is suffering greatly from critical food insecurity. As a result, various activities are being carried out to support the efforts of the Madagascan authorities in the light of this critical situation.

Sustainable Development Goal 14 advocates conserving and sustainably using oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. The awareness of the need to diversify efforts beyond land-based activities is nothing new. We support Africa's strategy, which is aimed at creating greater wealth by promoting a flourishing blue economy that is sustainable, secure and respectful of the environment. With this in mind and within the context of the Indian Ocean Commission, a decision was taken to establish the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre in Madagascar to prevent threats such as piracy, terrorism, trafficking in its many forms and the plundering of natural resources.

By signing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change on 22 April and then ratifying it, Madagascar has chosen to participate in the universal movement to transform the world, thereby ensuring the future of our planet — our sole and unique habitat. Madagascar is one of the countries permanently suffering from the devastating effects of climate change. Nevertheless, we advocate responsible development that preserves the environment. In return, we expect an equal distribution of resources from the Green Climate Fund and the transfer of relevant technologies. We must turn our back on expensive, pollutant energy sources that endanger the environment we share.

My country once again calls for the support of the international community and private investors, in particular in the electricity-production sector and in the renovation and expansion of water-distribution infrastructures. These are real investment opportunities. Indeed, if we wish to breathe new life into our planet for the well-being of its population and for the benefit of future generations, we must successfully ensure the transition to new kinds of energy at the national and global levels. We also wish to promote ethical tourism that respects the environment, our ecosystems and our culture.

Today, I wish to launch an appeal for the transfer of more technology and capital to countries that demonstrate strong potential, such as Madagascar. For our part, we commit to practicing good governance and transparency in the context of a win-win partnership. Both direct foreign investment and overseas development aid are valuable support mechanisms that we should channel in the best possible way and manage effectively in order to achieve the SDGs. That is why my country will invite our partners and international investors to Paris next December for a donor and investor conference in order to mobilize the resources we need for our development programme.

Seventy-one years following the creation of our Organization, we must acknowledge that much remains to be done in a world where we adjust far too quickly to misery, poverty and the precarious nature of life, where far too quickly we accept injustice and persistent inequality, conflict, crisis and even war. However, we must admit that the United Nations has documented major achievements and progress over the years. We remain firmly convinced that the United Nations today embodies a universal conscience recognized and respected by the international order, as well as

political will at the global level. It is a forum where nations can come to plead and explain their cause to the rest of the world. The most important thing is the respect of and follow-up to commitments, which is key to building trust.

On 17 June in Paris, upon the initiative of the French authorities, we restarted negotiations concerning the Malagasy islands of Glorieuses, Juan de Nova, Europa and Bassas da India, the latter three located in the Mozambique Channel. Madagascar is delighted at the initiative, which from our point of view is in line with the implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions. In paragraph 3 of resolution 34/91, of 12 December 1979, the Assembly

> "[i]nvites the Government of France to initiate negotiations without further delay with the Government of Madagascar for the reintegration of the above-mentioned islands, which were arbitrarily separated from Madagascar".

Resolution 35/123, of 11 December 1980, supplements the 1979 resolution as it

> "[i]nvites the Government of France to initiate with the Government of Madagascar, as a matter of urgency, the negotiations provided for in resolution 34/91, with a view to settling the question in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations" *(resolution 35/123, para. 4)*.

Madagascar would hope that the discussions that have been started will take place in full respect of the provisions of the Manila Declaration on the settlement of international disputes, enshrined in resolution 37/10, of 15 November 1982. The resolution underscores, inter alia, the obligations stemming from the fundamental principles of international law concerning the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States as well as the other generally recognized principles and norms of contemporary international law.

On matters of peace and security, I wish to reiterate my Government's gratitude to the United Nations and to the Peacebuilding Support Office, which agreed to the Peacebuilding Fund for Madagascar at the end of 2014. This year marks the operational phase of the Fund's priority plan, focusing on two main projects: support for reform of the security sector and for governance in Madagascar.

In the past 10 years, one man in particular has held high the torch of the United Nations and championed the values and principles that we all share. As I conclude my statement, I wish to pay well-deserved tribute to our dear Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, whose mandate is coming to an end this year. His commitment to peace and development throughout the world, his personal commitment and the way in which he has headed this Organization have earned our gratitude, esteem and respect.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Maamau: I am very pleased to address, for the first time, this global family of ours at its seventy-first gathering, on behalf of the Government and the people of Kiribati.

I join previous speakers in congratulating President Peter Thomson on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I am particularly proud to see a Pacific brother leading this body during this critical period of transformation. I have every confidence that with his

able leadership and Pacific wisdom, he will be able to guide us through these challenging times. He can be assured of our full support and cooperation.

I also join colleagues in acknowledging with appreciation the commendable leadership of his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft of Denmark, in guiding our work during the seventieth session and in facilitating the implementation of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This is a transitional period for us all. I am very happy that my first general debate coincides with the assumption of the Pacific to the presidency of the General Assembly. I am quite sad, though, that this is the last general debate of our beloved Secretary-General. I have read about and observed the untiring service that our Secretary-General has given humankind and his personal unwavering commitment and passion in focusing global attention on the most vulnerable, particularly the small and low-lying island countries as well as the communities on the front line of the many major challenges facing us today as a global family.

I am so proud to say that Mr. Ban Ki-moon is the first Secretary-General to ever have visited my country and our part of the world in the Pacific in the 71 years of the existence of this premier global body. This is a very rare opportunity, and I would like to personally thank and commend Mr. Ban Ki-moon for having taken that bold initiative. It is my sincere hope that the next visit of our Secretary-General to my country and the Pacific will be soon, not 60 or 70 years from now. This will be part of the transformation that we expect from our United Nations family.

Allow me, on this note, to acknowledge and commend, with heartfelt gratitude, the sterling leadership of our Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon. I thank and commend him for being a steadfast advocate for and the voice of the voiceless. I thank and commend him for instilling our United Nations family and reaffirming an inclusive culture that ensures that no one is left behind. The legacy he will leave is enshrined in the new sustainable development Agenda and in the Paris Agreement, the catalyst for global attention and action on climate change.

On behalf of the people and the Government of Kiribati, I wish our Secretary-General the very best as he concludes his term as head of this global family of ours and as he takes on the next challenge in his unwavering service to humankind.

We meet at a very critical time in our history. The challenges facing us as we gather at this session are perhaps greater than when we met a year ago. We note with grave concern the increasing security challenges facing our global family, from conflicts around the world, the scourge of terrorism, transnational organized crime, war and nuclear testing, mass movements of refugees and migrants, to the often unstated but invisible silent killer, the non-communicable diseases, the health of our oceans and other looming challenges and uncertainties, some with incremental but very real existential threats such as climate change. These continue to undermine our efforts as a global family to achieve sustainable development.

I would also like to add that the new session provides a great opportunity for all of us — an opportunity to reaffirm and renew our commitment to our people and our planet. This is an opportunity to achieve peace and prosperity for all through genuine partnerships, to consolidate our efforts and resources in order to address the challenges we face, and to realize our vision for bringing about an inclusive world. As leaders, it is our opportunity to deliver on our commitments. We have a moral responsibility to do that, and we must do so forthwith.

The theme of this session — "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world" — is a timely and appropriate one. For if we are to address the challenges we face and realize the opportunities available to us, we must change our mindset, our path and our ways. And we must do this together.

Climate change is a global challenge that requires universal transformation. We simply cannot afford to continue with business as usual. The future of those of us who are most vulnerable, such as my people and my country, is at stake. We need major changes in the global mindset, the global development pathways and the ways we do business. We must do this if we are to secure the future of my people and those who share the same fate, and to ensure that we are not left behind.

Every year, my country comes to this family gathering with constant cries for help in stopping the momentum of global warming and in assisting countries like mine to adapt to the adverse impact of climate change. It is distressing to see our people continuing to fight the effects of the onslaught of sea-level rises, storm surges and disasters such as Cyclone Pam and Cyclone

Winston on their homes, farmland and livelihood, their heritage and their critical source of water. And I must say that the increasing frequency and severity of such events has exacerbated their heartbreaking impact on our people.

In some parts of our country, whole villages have had to be relocated because of severe coastal erosion and flooding. Food crops have been destroyed. Our freshwater lenses, our major source of drinking water, are being increasingly contaminated by intruding seawater. As we enter the La Niña period, with drought forecast for our country, water scarcity is already an issue for our people in both urban and rural areas, which has the potential to trigger other risks, for example, to sanitation, health and education. Kiribati is closely monitoring the situation and is seriously considering the immediate options for ensuring our people's survival.

We urgently call for assistance from our United Nations family and its members, asking them to look into their hearts and help us address this looming, life-threatening issue as soon as possible. This is an issue that cannot wait for the Paris Agreement ratification process to happen. I came here straight from a meeting of our Parliament that was held because my people, especially our younger generation, are unremittingly protesting the increasing intensity of the effects of climate change. They are demanding swift action right now, without procrastination.

The adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change last year gave humankind a sense of hope, embodying the global consensus that climate change is happening and must be resolved as soon as possible. It is a major first step in global action to counter climate change. The next challenge is to ensure the Agreement's early entry into force. In this regard, I am pleased to say that following our signing of the Paris Agreement in April, I had the honour yesterday of depositing my country's instrument of ratification during the high-level event for the entry into force of the Agreement. We are fully committed to the Agreement and to all climate-related undertakings aimed at ensuring that our global family addresses the root causes and impacts of climate change.

The suffering of our people must stop now. The Paris Agreement will not only help us address our challenges as a low-lying atoll nation already on the front line; it can also save others on the way to increasing vulnerability from ending up on the front line in the future. I commend our bigger brothers in our global family, notably China and the United States, for their commitment to this process. I urge the rest of our United Nations family to join them and help save those who urgently require immediate support and action to make it happen. This is an opportunity for us as leaders to push for an early entry into force of the Paris Agreement and transform our world for our generation and, more importantly, for future generations.

This is an opportunity for us to take care of one another. And we must do it together, as a family. There is a huge risk of being left behind for low-lying island nations such as mine — Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, the Maldives and countless others whose peoples live in coastal areas prone to drought, desertification, flooding and typhoons.

The global challenges facing our people, especially the most vulnerable, continue to test our humanity, love and compassion, which are powerful ingredients for achieving the global transformation that can lead to the future we all want. If we fail to achieve this transformation, we will be failing the people who look to us for leadership in improving their quality of life and securing a future for them, their children and their children's children.

The President opened this session of the Assembly with his grandchildren by his side. It was a moving and significant moment, reminding all of us of our most important constituents, our children and their children. In his opening statement, he rightly said that it is our call to make, because if we fail, we have failed our grandchildren. As a leader and a grandfather, I am fully committed to serving and delivering to all the children and grandchildren of our global family.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have not been developed in a vacuum. They have been reflected over the years in one form or another in our own development plans. It is therefore to the national level that we should direct implementation assistance, including with additional resources, capacity-building and technology transfers. That is where such assistance can make a big difference in improving our peoples' lives, especially at the grassroots level.

It will be a challenge if we have to continue to compete for resources within our multilateral agencies. On that note, I wish to acknowledge with deep appreciation the continuing assistance for our sustainable development efforts from our development

partners. But implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will require much more. The universal push to transform our world requires all of us to contribute. It requires a global effort.

It is troubling to note that for years, indeed decades, our global family has often ignored the support and instrumental role of those who have contributed to the implementation of our sustainable development goals. As some of us would acknowledge, Taiwan has served as a significant partner and contributed significantly to achieving the objectives of our global family. This must be acknowledged and the increased and meaningful participation of Taiwan in international processes should be encouraged. We need our global transformation to include those who can contribute to the effective implementation of the SDGs.

I strongly believe that effective global transformation must start with leadership at the individual, community, Government and national levels. Good governance, transparency and accountability have been the fundamental guiding principles of my Government since our assumption of office over six months ago. They underpin our overarching policy objective to serve and to deliver to our people as responsible leaders.

I am very proud to say that at our first meeting of Parliament, we established a select committee on anti-corruption. Just last week, the Government submitted draft legislation to our Parliament on a code of conduct for leaders. In addition, during the same week, our Parliament passed a constitutional amendment that established a new Ministry of Justice. This will lead to a strengthening of our justice system and elevate levels of transparency and accountability. We firmly believe that, as a Government, we can transform our nation for the better if our actions as leaders are underpinned by strong principles of good governance, transparency and accountability. This promotes our people's confidence and trust in their representatives.

If we are serious and genuine about the true transformation that we are talking about, then I challenge all of us, as leaders and representatives of our peoples, to ask ourselves this fundamental question: what is the greatest value and gift we have to give that can break the barriers between our peoples, our communities, our nations and our global family and truly transform our world? The answer is simple and the common denominator is also straightforward: it is our hearts and our love. This has been a missing ingredient in our recipe for global peace and security. Our biggest challenge here at the United Nations is that we have not been sharing our hearts and our love with each other. In fact, over the past 70 years, what we have been doing is fighting within our own family.

I truly believe that the heart of our United Nations family is the heart of all nations, big and small, land-locked and sea-locked, rich and poor, the most vulnerable and the least vulnerable. The heart of the United Nations should therefore beat for everyone, not just a few. Just this morning, I had the gracious honour and privilege to join the Federation of World Peace and Love in ringing a bell for love and peace in the world with a special prayer for Kiribati. This is a reminder to the world, particularly to all of us leaders, of our fundamental role as peacemakers.

We are reminded every day of the very purpose of this United Nations family — to promote and maintain peace and security in all its forms. It is a major challenge but a challenge that I believe can be overcome if we start working together as a true United Nations family with love, care, compassion, understanding, respect and tolerance. This is a true global transformation that can help our United Nations family serve its members and deliver solutions and results.

We are called upon to take up the challenge of this United Nations family gathering and ask whether or not we can transform ourselves and make a difference in the name of love — a simple but powerful and inclusive four-letter word that resonates in the four corners of the world. As we contemplate this question, I would like to conclude by sharing a poem that represents our hope and identity — an identity that we will fight to save as long as we can. We need help in this fight so that a part of this global family does not get left behind or lose its liberty or identity. The title of the poem is "My Frigatebird".

"Cloaked in black, white-bellied, and fork-tailed,
you are my beauty in the north.
With your long and graceful wings, you are my
inspiration in the centre.
As you speed across the deep vast ocean, you are
my sanctuary in the south.
With your clicking, wheezy calls, you are my song
and my garland everywhere.
On a banner of blue, white, yellow and red, you
ascend beyond the waves and the sun's rays.
Now you struggle against storms and westerly
winds to find food and nesting.

But you will never leave in haste nor go in flight,
for you are the fulcrum of the universe.
Arise, my frigate bird with valor and strength, rise
over the perilous tides from the east and fly
brave and proud on the currents of wind, for
you are and will always be my transformation.
Proud am I to be an I-Kiribati — my frigatebird,
my liberty, my identity."

In closing, I share with everyone in this Hall our hearts, our love and now our traditional blessing for health, peace and prosperity: "*Te Mauri, Te Raoi ao Te Tabomoa*".

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Patrice Athanase Guillaume Talon, President of the Republic of Benin

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Benin.

Mr. Patrice Athanase Guillaume Talon, President of the Republic of Benin, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Patrice Athanase Guillaume Talon, President of the Republic of Benin, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Talon (*spoke in French*): I would like to start by congratulating Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I would also like to recognize his predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for the excellent work he accomplished while President. I particularly wish to thank and congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his efforts and service to stability, peace, security and development in the world.

Benin warmly welcomes the theme of this year's session, entitled "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", as it appropriately responds to current concerns. The world has always managed to mobilize and organize itself when facing difficult challenges or global threats. The challenge of climate change has led us to put our heads together and to take the decision to mobilize substantial resources.

Today's open world will suffer more than ever from the consequences of poverty — in particular, uncontrollable and destabilizing migration movements — if nothing is done. Mass poverty has now become a major threat to humankind. It has become urgent to put in place a global programme to eradicate mass poverty, with the same determination that led us to hold the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. That being so, from this rostrum I call on the most developed countries and the institutions that finance development to implement strong and collective action, with a view to eradicating poverty, which is dangerously sidelining the majority of African countries.

Mr. El Hayeen (Mauritania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The international community has the capacity to do this, as it recently demonstrated when it prevented Greece and Ukraine from collapsing. That effort did not ruin the countries or the institutions that mobilized themselves in the rescue operation. To quickly and efficiently eradicate poverty and underdevelopment in Africa, that same will, but not necessarily more resources, will be required. Of course, African countries will need to assume their share of responsibility by doing more for political stability and, above all, for good governance.

My country Benin is committed to this approach and has initiated the necessary political, administrative and good-governance reforms. One can add to this nearly half a century of political stability as well as a mature democracy — all of these elements give Benin the ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, provided that the country receives adequate support.

I would like to state that my country is committed to contributing actively to the implementation of the decisions on climate change that were adopted during the Paris Conference. I note that Benin has already signed the Paris Agreement and the ratification process is ongoing. To conclude, I wish to reiterate that Benin

remains committed within the international community to transforming the world with a view to achieving a shared well-being.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Benin for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Patrice Athanase Guillaume Talon, President of the Republic of Benin, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ouattara (*spoke in French*): Our session is taking place amid grim economic and social circumstances that may slow down our collective progress in combating poverty, reducing inequalities and implementing development programmes. Despite these particular circumstances, we must be tireless in our pursuit to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the next 15 years.

We must win the fight against abject poverty and suffering to spare humankind the potentially tragic consequences of failed development. That is why I invite developed countries to honour all their commitments to developing countries in the context of the SDGs and development financing. Here, I remind the Assembly of the commitments made in July 2015 in Addis Ababa at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and also those made regarding Goal 17 of the SDGs, as well as such specific instruments as the Green Climate Fund.

I welcome the choice of theme for the session, which reminds us of the need to accelerate the pace of change in our societies and to give more opportunities and means to our most vulnerable populations. We must therefore build productive economies if we wish to implement the SDG road map. Our true aspirations for sustainable development must also be mindful of the environment and our determination to combat global warming. We paved the way in Paris, and we must all implement the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and honour our commitments.

My country's implementation of the Paris Agreement is under way. The Agreement has been deemed to be in accordance with our Constitution, and my Government will deposit its instruments of ratification before the end of the year. Through our National Development Programme 2016-2020 and our Côte d'Ivoire Perspectives 2040, we intend to mobilize the means required to implement the SDGs. The positive economic situation in our country has already enabled us to improve all social indicators and embark on a comprehensive process to reduce poverty and redistribute the dividends of economic growth. All these achievements will be fully enjoyed by our people in the long term.

The ongoing nature of many conflicts remains a true concern for my country. Our Organization, in particular the Security Council and the main stakeholders concerned, must surpass themselves by engaging every means possible to end the suffering of the peoples in Syria, the Middle East, South Sudan and Mali, to mention but those conflicts. Even if the Council reflects our aspirations, the Council cannot effectively resolve the conflicts of our century with its current configuration and working methods. My country calls on all Member States to act and to carry out a comprehensive and just reform of the Security Council that will further bolster its legitimacy in the eyes of the world, and especially of the younger generations.

The world must mobilize against terrorism and fight it with the utmost resolve and determination before it inflicts irreparable damage and trauma on our countries and societies. Here, I offer a thought for all the victims of terrorism and express my sympathy to all the families who are in mourning around the world on account of these barbaric acts. As many countries before it, my country witnessed unbearable scenes after the cowardly attack in Grand Bassam, and that reminds us yet again, as if we needed reminding, that no country today is safe from a terrorist attack. No country alone can eradicate this scourge. It falls on the United Nations

therefore, to an even greater degree than in the past, to coordinate international efforts to combat terrorism.

Unless a collective effort is made to bear the cost of security for all, our developing countries will invest in their national security the resources that would otherwise be spent on tomorrow's priority social programmes. We are familiar with the serious consequences that this would entail, given our young populations. The worsening security environment in many countries has led to a sudden rise in migratory flows of people who are ready to brave all the dangers of a Mediterranean crossing or a journey through the Balkans to reach Europe in particular. Fear and isolation are not an appropriate response when these migrants arrive.

The host countries and the international community as a whole must show solidarity and take initiatives in order to tackle the root causes of this phenomenon. Countries of origin must do more to improve living conditions and create a climate of peace and security for their citizens. My Government wishes to welcome the progress achieved at the high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, held here at United Nations Headquarters early this week. But we must do more and do better.

The nation of Côte d'Ivoire is continuing to develop and modernize its institutions. The economy of Côte d'Ivoire continues to grow at an average annual rate of about 9 per cent. This has enabled us to pursue our efforts to establish the economic and social infrastructures that are needed to improve the well-being of our population. Côte d'Ivoire is peaceful. The successful presidential election in October 2015 put the seal on the return to peace and stability. In the coming months, the Ivorian people will be called on to renew the mandate of parliamentarians and to vote on a new draft constitution, in line with our desire for a modern State.

Given the satisfactory progress of recent years, in April the Security Council lifted the sanctions regime that had been imposed on Côte d'Ivoire in 2004. In June 2017, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) will end its mandate and leave Côte d'Ivoire once and for all after 12 years of continuous presence. We are particularly proud of these developments. UNOCI goes down in the history of peacekeeping operations as a real success story. I take this opportunity to reiterate our gratitude to the United Nations and all the countries that provided troops to UNOCI.

Given this remarkable progression, my country has decided to put forward its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2018-2019. The Economic Community of West African States and the African Union have endorsed our bid. In that regard, I call on all States Members of our Organization to support the candidacy of Côte d'Ivoire during the elections to be held in June 2017. Through this candidacy, we intend to share with other Member States our successful experience of peacekeeping and cooperation within the United Nations.

I recall that Côte d'Ivoire has in the past contributed to the stabilization efforts in the Congo, Haiti and Central Africa through the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, respectively. It is in this spirit that Côte d'Ivoire, as part of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, has worked side by side with our brothers in Mali in a transport company between 2013 and 2015, and we are prepared to send a protection company of approximately 150 individuals by the end of the year.

I cannot conclude my statement without paying a well-deserved tribute and to express, on behalf of the people and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and on my own behalf, our profound gratitude to the Secretary-General, my friend Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his exceptional contribution to peace in the world and in our country. We commend him for his leadership, for the wise way in which he has steered our Organization over the past years and for his constant commitment to peace, security and development in the world. As he ends his term in the service of our Organization, we wish him well in his future endeavours.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the State of Palestine.

Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Abbas *(spoke in Arabic)*: I had hoped that I would not have to deliver this statement today, as would have been the case if the cause of my people had been genuinely heard and justly resolved and if hearts and minds had acted to lift my people from oppression.

As everyone is aware, we accepted the primacy of international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy, and made a historic and immense sacrifice when the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, accepted the establishment of the State of Palestine based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

What more can be asked of us? We remain committed to the agreements reached with Israel in 1993. However, Israel must reciprocate and act forthwith to resolve all the final-status issues. It must cease all its settlement activities and acts of aggression against our cities, villages and refugee camps. It must cease its policies of collective punishment, its demolition of Palestinian homes, its extrajudicial executions and the arrest of our people. It must release our prisoners and detainees, all thousands of them, and cease its aggression and provocations against the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, for all these policies and practices prevent the creation of an environment in which peace can prevail in our region.

How can anyone seeking peace commit such actions? In this regard, we reaffirm that we find the current situation unacceptable. We will never accept the humiliation of our people. We will never accept temporary or interim solutions. Our people will never agree to forgo their national institutions and the other achievements that were won through great sacrifice, suffering and pain. We will preserve the independence of Palestinian decision-making. We will act to fulfil the aspirations of our people through political and diplomatic means, while relying on international law and the legitimacy of international resolutions via the United Nations and all international forums. We will seek to mobilize Arab and international efforts to that end. We will not accept the continuation of the status quo.

The 1993 Oslo Accords were intended to end the occupation, to achieve an independent State of Palestine within five years. Yet, Israel renounced the agreements it signed and persists in its occupation and continues to expand its illegal settlements, thereby undermining the realization of the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders. Does Israel want one State? None of the 12 Security Council resolutions condemning Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory since 1967 has been implemented, and Israel therefore pursues its plans for the seizure of more Palestinian land in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with impunity. The violent actions of Israeli settlers have gone as far as the formation of terrorist groups that burn homes and kill entire families, destroy properties and uproot the trees that are the livelihood of Palestinian families.

Israel's disrespect and contemptuous policies have led to attempts to legalize the settlements and the settlers' colonization of our occupied land since 1967 and even to the Israeli Prime Minister's claim that the call for the cessation of settlements and their dismantlement constitutes ethnic cleansing. All such claims and attempts are null and void; they are clearly in grave breach of international law.

So, who then is practising ethnic cleansing? In that regard, I am compelled to warn the General Assembly again that what the Israeli Government is doing in pursuit of its expansionist settlement plans will destroy whatever chance is left for the adoption of the two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. The settlements are illegal in every respect and in any form. We will therefore continue to exert all efforts for the adoption of a Security Council resolution on the settlements and the terror perpetrated by the settlers. To that end, we are currently undertaking extensive consultations with the Arab countries and other friendly countries. We hope that no one will cast a veto against this draft resolution.

The racial discrimination against the Palestinian people has become a daily reality as Israel continues to favour the Israeli settlers on our occupied land, including

by granting them permits for residential construction, factories, economic projects and infrastructure, such as roads, electricity and water networks. At the same time, Israel is preventing the Palestinians — the owners of the land — from using their land and prohibiting them from developing their economy in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley and the Palestinian shores on the Dead Sea. It continues with its illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, as well as with its illegal alteration of the identity and status of occupied East Jerusalem and its acts of aggression and provocation against our Christian and Muslim holy sites, especially the Al-Aqsa Mosque. That is playing with fire. I repeat, it is playing with fire. No one knows what may happen if those acts of aggression continue.

All of those Israeli policies, actions and measures are reasons for the failure of every international effort for the past 13 years, particularly those of the Quartet, in the same way that Israel has sabotaged the efforts of successive American Administrations over the decades. In that regard, I have to once again appeal to the United Nations to help provide international protection for the Palestinian people, who since 1967 have been suffering under occupation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in the Gaza Strip. I am very grateful in that regard to the Secretary-General and the members of the Security Council, who convened an Arria Formula meeting of the Council to explore the possibilities of international protection for our people, and I urge that such efforts continue. If the United Nations cannot ensure our protection, who will?

Today Israel continues its attempts to evade the possibility of an international conference for peace, an idea proposed by France and supported by most of the countries of the world. A ministerial meeting, in which 28 countries and three intergovernmental organizations participated, was held in Paris in June to prepare for the convening of such a conference. We continue to hope that holding such a conference can lead to the establishment of a mechanism and a defined time frame for ending the occupation, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative — which, among other things, calls for a just and agreed-on solution for Palestinian refugees, in accordance with resolution 194 (III). We hope that every country in the world will support convening such a peace conference before the end of this year. Without an international peace conference and direct negotiations between us and the Israelis, how can we make peace or even speak about it?

Instead of ensuring that Israel acknowledges the atrocities it continues to commit against our people, the Israeli Prime Minister has had the audacity to criticize Palestine's statement at the Arab League Summit in Nouakchott, Mauritania, because it referred to the Balfour Declaration. I say to him today that our recognition in 1993 of the existence of the State of Israel, a recognition that continues to be valid, is not free of charge. Israel should reciprocate with its own recognition of the State of Palestine and end its occupation of our land, so that the State of Palestine and the State of Israel can coexist alongside each other, in peace and security, as good neighbours, each within secure and recognized borders.

There is no conflict between us and the Jewish religion and people. Our conflict is with the Israeli occupation of our land. We have full respect for the Jewish religion, which is a monotheistic one, just as we respect other religions, and in that regard we condemn the catastrophe of the Holocaust that befell the Jewish people in Europe during the Second World War. It was one of the most heinous crimes ever perpetrated against humankind. A historic reconciliation between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples requires that Israel acknowledge its responsibility for the Nakba that is still being inflicted on our people to this very day. Such an acknowledgement would open a new era of coexistence and serve to build bridges rather than walls. I believe that the Arab Peace Initiative embodies a reasonable, sensible solution. Yet Israel continues to insist on being selective, picking and choosing only parts of the Initiative, such as insisting on establishing relations with the Arab countries before ending its occupation of Palestine. That is simply a recipe for more conflict in the region. We will not accept it and neither will anyone else. The Arab Peace Initiative should be implemented in full, from A to Z, and Israel must understand that.

By the end of the coming year, 100 years will have passed since the Balfour Declaration; 70 since the Nakba of the Palestinian people; and 50 since Israel occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Yes, 100 years have passed since the promulgation of the infamous Balfour Declaration, whereby Britain gave the land of Palestine to another people without any right, authority or consent from anyone. That paved the way for the Nakba and the Palestinian people's dispossession and displacement

from their land. As if that were not enough, the British mandate translated the Declaration into policies and measures that helped to perpetrate heinous crimes against a peaceful people in their own land, a people who had never attacked or taken part in a war against anyone. As we approach the 100th anniversary of that infamous Declaration, we would like to ask the British to draw the necessary lessons and shoulder their historical, legal, political, material and moral responsibilities for it, including an apology to the Palestinian people for the disasters, misery and injustice that it has created, and to act to rectify that historic catastrophe and remedy its consequences, including through recognition of the State of Palestine. That is the least Britain can do.

In addition, since 1948, Israel has persisted in its contempt for international legitimacy by violating resolution 181 (II), known as the partition resolution, which called for the establishment of two States on the historic land of Palestine according to a specific partition plan. Israeli forces seized more land than was allotted to Israel, constituting a grave breach of Articles 39, 41 and 42 of the Charter of the United Nations. In paragraph (c) of that resolution, the General Assembly requests that the Security Council

> "determine as a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression, in accordance with Article 39 of the Charter, any attempt to alter by force the settlement envisaged by this resolution".

Regrettably, however, the Security Council is not discharging its responsibility to hold Israel accountable for seizing territory allotted to the Palestinian State under the partition resolution. Over half of the Palestinian territory was taken by Israel. To reiterate, the Security Council is not discharging its responsibility to hold Israel accountable for its seizure of territory allotted to the Palestinian State under the partition resolution. I appeal to everyone to read resolution 181 (II) once again.

We continue our efforts to promote a culture of peace among our people. We stand firmly against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We condemn terrorism regardless of who perpetrates it or where it is perpetrated. Our region has been the principal victim of terrorism, a scourge that it has endured for many years. We support the unity of people and respect for territorial integrity. We are in favour of reaching political solutions for the conflicts in Syria, Libya, Iraq and elsewhere. We commend the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to strengthen the foundations of legitimacy in Yemen. We support the efforts to confront and overcome terrorism, extremism, sectarianism and violence. I appeal to everyone to stand united against terrorism. Terrorism knows no religion.

In that connection, I wish to reaffirm that there is no way to defeat terrorism and extremism and achieve security and stability in our region unless we end the Israeli occupation of Palestine and ensure the freedom and independence of the Palestinian people. Fighting terrorism and extremism begins with the ending of the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

We continue our genuine, dedicated efforts to achieve Palestinian reconciliation with the formation of a national unity Government in accordance with the political platform of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections. We are committed to rebuilding Gaza, alleviating the hardships of our people and lifting the illegal blockade imposed on them.

Our hand remains outstretched to those interested in peacebuilding. There is one outstanding question that we have to keep asking over and over again, namely, is there any leader in Israel, the occupying Power, who truly desires to make peace and abandon the mentality of hegemony, expansionism and colonization? Is there any Israeli leader who will recognize the rights of our people and end the historical injustice inflicted upon them? It is Israel's breach of the agreements it has signed and its failure to comply with the obligations it has assumed that have caused the deadlock and stalemate in which we find ourselves.

The State of Palestine, which was accorded the status of observer State in the United Nations with the support of 138 countries, is a State under occupation. The Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization — the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people wherever they may be — acts on behalf of our people and as their Government. The Palestine National Council is the Parliament of the State of Palestine, as reflected in resolution 67/19.

We have not lost hope yet. We expect the international community to shoulder its responsibilities. We call on countries that have acted against our people to rectify such injustices. Moreover, we appeal to countries that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine to do so. Those who believe in the two-State solution — and everyone speaks about the two-State

solution — should recognize both States and not just one of them.

I invite the General Assembly to mark this seventy-first session by declaring 2017 as the international year to end the Israeli occupation of our land. In June 2017 half a century will have elapsed since the abhorrent Israeli occupation began. I also appeal to members, as a follow-up to resolution 67/19, to adopt a draft resolution that will enable Palestine to submit and co-sponsor draft resolutions on subjects other than the question of Palestine and to support our efforts to enhance Palestine's legal and political status by granting it additional responsibilities to chair committees and groups as we continue our quest for full membership in international organizations.

Given all this, the international community is called upon, now more than ever, to exert all efforts to bring an end to the Israeli occupation of the land of the State of Palestine. As members are aware, this is the longest and the last occupation in contemporary history. If the international community were to deliver on its ability to advance the rights of our people, ensure the exercise of those same rights and end the oppression and injustice imposed on our people for seven decades, that would surely present a unique opportunity for peace, stability and coexistence in our region and between the Palestinian and Israeli people. It would create a better future for the current generation and succeeding generations. It would be a beginning, a basis for ending extremism and violence in our region and the world.

I hope, from the depths of my heart, that the Israeli occupation of our land will end, that we can defeat terrorism, that the current conflicts will be concluded and that peace will prevail in our region and around the world. Our people will continue to open the door to peace and do all we can to grant our people freedom and independence. We will remain steadfast in our land, and we will work to prepare the future of the next generation. It is my hope that I will not have to deliver this same statement again next year. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that 2017 is the year when the occupation ends. Will the Assembly discharge that responsibility? I truly hope so.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the State of Palestine for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Norway.

Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Ms. Solberg (Norway): This year's session of the General Assembly comes at a critical time. Over the past few years we have witnessed grave violations of the very principles on which the United Nations is based — violations that have caused widespread human suffering and insecurity. Syria, Yemen, Ukraine and South Sudan are some examples, but the list goes on. Yet at the same time, the world has moved forward, countries have come together, found compromises and taken joint action, as, for example, when we reached the Paris Agreement and adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — the road map for our future coexistence and cooperation.

Therefore, where do we go from here? We cannot let fear guide our actions. We cannot return to a world of zero-sum games, narrow national interests and protectionism. We cannot move away from a rules-based system that guards against confrontation and unpredictability. We — the international community — must rally around the multilateral system with renewed strength. Let me assure the Assembly that Norway will work hard to promote respect for international law and to find common solutions.

My own continent, Europe, has enjoyed a unique era of peace, democracy and trade. Now, however, we are facing a complex security situation. Unfortunately, some States have chosen not to abide by international law and are simply pursuing national interests at the expense of others. Instability in the Middle East and

North Africa is causing widespread human suffering and leading to violent extremism in Europe. The response should not be to isolate ourselves; instead, we must cooperate and find solutions.

The humanitarian situation in Syria simply cannot be tolerated. Global and regional Powers must take action to secure an enduring ceasefire and ensure humanitarian access — right now. The world expects the Security Council and the International Syria Support Group to deliver. And it is not just Syria that we need to focus on. Conflict and suffering continue elsewhere, and more needs to be done to find common solutions to common challenges. In that context, let me send a message to President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu, who are speaking before and after me today. I strongly urge the parties to address the imminent threats to the two-State solution by implementing the recommendations in the Quartet report.

We must intensify our efforts to tackle the humanitarian consequences of today's crises. Norway will continue to provide record levels of humanitarian assistance — to Syria, to South Sudan and elsewhere. Together we need to intensify our efforts to promote peace and stability in a wide range of fragile and conflict-affected States. We need to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to help countries emerging from conflict. We have a clear responsibility to fight terrorism and step up our efforts to prevent violent extremism. In order to do so, we need to work closely with civil society, women, young people, faith leaders and local communities.

We need to translate the women and peace and security agenda into more effective action on the ground. We need to ensure that peace operations deliver on their mandates to protect civilians. Sexual exploitation and abuse must stop. We need zero tolerance and resolute action by the United Nations. United Nations peacekeepers, development workers and humanitarian workers from a large number of countries are making a real difference in numerous countries, including Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They must be equipped with the tools and resources they need. I would like to assure the Assembly that Norway will continue to provide substantial humanitarian and development assistance and support the reform of United Nations peace operations.

However, we cannot prevent or resolve conflicts by addressing the consequences alone. We must also address the underlying causes. Thankfully, in some places, our efforts are producing tangible results. After more than five decades of conflict, peace is now within reach in Colombia. I am proud that, together with Cuba, Norway facilitated the peace process. It will be a great and historic step forward for the region, and Norway will continue to provide diplomatic and practical support to the Colombian peace process in its crucial implementation phase.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are ground-breaking. They provide us with a road map for the future we want, and we have agreed to leave no one behind. That means that we must address inequality and social injustice and safeguard the rule of law. It also means that we must empower women and men alike. We must strengthen the human rights pillar of the United Nations, both financially and politically. That should be seen as an important investment in the future. I would like to highlight the role played by those who promote the rights of others — of women, minorities and members of marginalized communities. Human rights defenders are an important corrective in any society, and only weak leaders fear correction.

The SDGs are all about building inclusive societies. Inclusive societies perform better. The right to education and health is crucial in that regard. Today there are 263 million children and young people who are not in school, and the number is growing. Last year, together with the Presidents of Chile, Indonesia and Malawi and the Director-General of UNESCO, I initiated the establishment of the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity. On Sunday, the Commission submitted a report entitled "The Learning Generation" with recommendations to the Secretary-General. The Commission makes a strong case for why it is so vital to ensure that the world invests in education as a key driver of economic growth. I could not agree more. We must avoid a global learning crisis, and the consequences of inaction will be severe. Together, we must invest more to ensure that no one is left behind. Each and every one of us should have the same learning opportunities, and the education of girls is especially important. When girls go to school and get an education, it not only represents the exercise of a fundamental right, it is also good for the economy. Global education will continue to be a top priority of Norway's development policy.

Mr. Zamora Rivas (El Salvador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Another priority for Norway is strengthening epidemic preparedness and global health security by developing new vaccines that can prevent new outbreaks. That important goal requires effective partnerships across national borders and across every sector of society, along with the mobilization of both domestic and private-sector resources. Antibiotic medicines have saved millions of lives, but antimicrobial resistance is making them increasingly ineffective. If we do not act, we could reach a stage where common infections are once again deadly. Our grandchildren could die from illnesses that our grandparents survived. New global health challenges require increased international cooperation. I am therefore pleased that we managed to put the issue high on the agenda this week. We know what needs to be done, and now it is time do the work back home.

The Climate Conference in Paris late last year marked a turning point in the fight to save our planet. We now need effective and concerted action in order to bring down emissions and meet the ambitious objectives that we have set ourselves. Our ambition is to do all of that while still providing decent work and economic growth for all. That will require investment in innovation, and we have no time to lose.

In the decades ahead, the oceans will play a bigger role in the global economy. Today, 17 per cent of all of the animal protein consumed globally comes from the sea. In order to meet growing demands, the share of our food that we obtain from the oceans will have to increase substantially. Since growth from capture fisheries is limited, we need more sustainable aquaculture. As world trade continues to grow, the need for marine transport will increase. The oceans are also already a major source of energy. That resource must be developed further, so as to meet the growing demand for clean and renewable energy. In short, the oceans hold great promise for the future. We have seen only the very beginning of the blue economy. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea strikes a delicate balance between competing interests and needs, enabling us to realize the potential of marine resources, protect marine biodiversity and prevent conflicts in the maritime domain.

The adoption of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement shows what can be achieved when countries come together to find compromises and take action. In our globalized and interdependent world, effective international cooperation is essential if we are to address poverty, conflicts, climate change, migration and terrorism. No Government can single-handedly deliver effective solutions to the challenges we face. This morning, Norway, together with Colombia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Jordan and Mexico, presented five recommendations intended for the new Secretary-General, aimed at promoting an independent and credible United Nations that can play a uniting and leading role. The United Nations has a unique place in the multilateral world order. It is our shared responsibility to defend a world order in which solutions are found through negotiation and respect for international law. The validity of the United Nations mandate remains strong, but the Organization will also have to reform itself if it is to address the challenges ahead.

I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his hard work and success in a range of areas, including the adoption of the SDGs. The next Secretary-General must continue to defend and promote the multilateral world order and lead the process of change that will be needed in order to ensure global stability and sustainable development for all. Norway will support him or her in that endeavour.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Norway for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the State of Israel.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Netanyahu (Israel): What I am about to say is going to shock everyone — Israel has a bright future at the United Nations. I know that hearing that from me must surely come as a surprise, because year after year I have stood at this very rostrum and slammed the United Nations for its obsessive bias against Israel.

And the United Nations has deserved every scathing word — for instance, for the disgrace of the General Assembly last year, which adopted 20 resolutions against the democratic State of Israel and a grand total of three resolutions against all the other countries on the planet. Israel, 20; the rest of the world, three.

And what about the joke called the United Nations Human Rights Council, which each year condemns Israel more than all the countries of the world combined? As women are being systematically raped, murdered and sold into slavery across the world, which is the only country that the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women chose to condemn this year? Yes, Israel. Israel, where women fly fighter jets, lead major corporations, head universities, preside — twice — over the Supreme Court, and have served as Speaker of the Knesset and Prime Minister. And that circus continues at UNESCO, the United Nations body charged with preserving world heritage. This is hard to believe, but UNESCO just denied the 4,000-year connection between the Jewish people and its holiest site, the Temple Mount. That is just as absurd as denying the connection between the Great Wall of China and China.

The United Nations, which began as a moral force, has become a moral farce. Therefore, when it comes to Israel at the United Nations, one might well think that nothing will ever change. Well, think again. Everything will change, and a lot sooner than one might think. The change will happen in this Hall, because back home Governments are rapidly changing their attitudes towards Israel. Sooner or later, that is going to change the way everyone votes on Israel at the United Nations.

More and more nations in Asia, in Africa and in Latin America see Israel as a potent partner in fighting the terrorism of today and in developing the technology of tomorrow. Today, Israel has diplomatic relations with over 160 countries, nearly double the number from when I served here as Israel's Ambassador some 30 years ago. Those ties are getting broader and deeper every day. World leaders increasingly appreciate that Israel is a powerful country with one of the best intelligence services on Earth. Because of our unmatched experience and proven capabilities in fighting terrorism, many Governments will seek our help in keeping their countries safe.

Many also seek to benefit from Israel's ingenuity in agriculture, in health, in water, in cybersecurity and in the fusion of big data, connectivity and artificial intelligence — that fusion that is changing our world in every way. Israel leads the world in recycling wastewater. We recycle about 90 per cent of our wastewater. How remarkable is that? Given that the next country on the list recycles only about 20 per cent of its wastewater, Israel is a global water Power. If we have a thirsty world, and we do, there is no better ally than Israel.

How about cybersecurity? That is an issue that affects everyone. Israel accounts for one tenth of 1 per cent of the world's population, yet last year we attracted some 20 per cent of the global private investment in cybersecurity. If we digest that number, we see that Israel is punching a whopping 200 times above its weight. Therefore, Israel is also a global cybersecurity Power. If hackers are targeting banks, planes, power grids and just about everything else, Israel can offer indispensable help. Governments are changing their attitudes towards Israel because they know that Israel can help them protect, feed and improve the lives of their people.

This summer, I had an unbelievable opportunity to see that change vividly during an unforgettable visit to four African countries. That was the first visit to Africa by an Israeli Prime Minister in decades. Later today, I will be meeting with leaders from 17 African countries. We will discuss how Israeli technology can help them in their efforts to transform their countries. In Africa, things are changing. In China, India, Russia and Japan, attitudes towards Israel have changed as well. Those powerful nations know that, despite Israel's small size, it can make a big difference in many areas that are important to them.

But now I am going to surprise everyone even more. The biggest changes in attitudes towards Israel is taking place elsewhere. It is taking place in the Arab world. Our peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan continue to be anchors of stability in the volatile Middle East. For the first time in my lifetime, many other States in the region recognize that Israel is not their enemy. They recognize that Israel is their ally. Our common enemies are Iran and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. Our common goals are security, prosperity and peace.

I believe that, in the years ahead, we will work together to achieve those goals, work together openly. Therefore, Israel's diplomatic relations are undergoing nothing less than a revolution. But in that revolution we never forget that our cherished alliance, our deepest

friendship, is with the United States of America, the powerful and the most generous nation on Earth. Our unbreakable bond with the United States of America transcends parties and politics. It reflects, above all else, the overwhelming support for Israel among the American people, support which is at record highs and for which we are deeply grateful.

The United Nations denounces Israel; the United States supports Israel. And a central pillar of that defence has been America's consistent support for Israel at the United Nations. I appreciate President Obama's commitment to that long-standing United States policy. In fact, the only time that the United States cast a Security Council veto during the Obama presidency was against an anti-Israel draft resolution in 2011 (see S/PV.6484). As President Obama rightly declared at this rostrum, peace will not come from statements and resolutions at the United Nations. I believe the day is not far off when Israel will be able to rely on many countries to stand with us at the United Nations. Slowly but surely, the days when United Nations Ambassadors reflexively condemn Israel are coming to an end.

Today's automatic majority against Israel at the United Nations reminds me of the incredible story of Hiroo Onada, who was a Japanese soldier sent to the Philippines in 1944. He lived in the jungle. He scavenged for food. He evaded capture. Eventually he surrendered, but that did not happen until 1974, some 30 years after the end of the Second World War. For decades, Hiroo refused to believe the war was over. As Hiroo was hiding in the jungle, Japanese tourists were swimming in pools in American luxury hotels in nearby Manila. Finally, mercifully, Hiroo's former commanding officer was sent to persuade him to come out of hiding. Only then did Hiroo lay down his arms.

I have one message for those present here today, that is, that they too should lay down their arms. The war against Israel at the United Nations is over. Perhaps some of those present do not know it yet, but I am confident that one day in the not too distant future they will also get the message from their leaders informing them that the war against Israel at the United Nations has ended. Yes, I know, there might be a storm before the calm. I know there is talk about ganging up on Israel at the United Nations later this year.

Given the United Nations history of hostility towards Israel, does anyone really believe that Israel will let the United Nations determine our security and our vital national interests? We will not accept any attempt by the United Nations to dictate terms to Israel. The road to peace runs through Jerusalem and Ramallah, not through New York. But regardless of what happens in the months ahead, I have total confidence that, in the years ahead, the revolution in Israel's standing among the nations will finally penetrate this Hall of nations.

I have so much confidence, in fact, that I predict that a decade from now an Israeli Prime Minister will stand right here where I am standing and actually applaud the United Nations. But I want to ask: why do we have to wait a decade? Why keep vilifying Israel? Perhaps because some do not appreciate that the obsessive bias against Israel is not just a problem for my country, it is a problem for the other countries too. If the United Nations spends so much time condemning the only liberal democracy in the Middle East, it has far less time to address war, disease, poverty, climate change and all of the other serious problems that plague the planet.

Are the half-million slaughtered Syrians helped by Member States' condemnation of Israel? The same Israel that has treated thousands of injured Syrians in our hospitals, including a field hospital that I built right along the Golan Heights border with Syria. Are the gays hanging from cranes in Iran helped by acts to denigrate Israel? That same Israel where gays march proudly in our streets and serve in our Parliament, including, I am proud to say, in my own Likud party. The starving children in North Korea's brutal tyranny, are they helped by the demonization of Israel? Israel, whose agricultural know-how is feeding the hungry throughout the developing world? The sooner the United Nations obsession with Israel ends, the better — the better for Israel, the better for other countries, the better for the United Nations itself.

If United Nations habits die hard, Palestinian habits die even harder. President Abbas just attacked, from this rostrum, the Balfour Declaration. He is preparing a lawsuit against Britain for that declaration from 1917. That is almost 100 years ago — talk about being stuck in the past. The Palestinians may just as well sue Iran for the Cyrus Declaration, which enabled the Jews to rebuild our Temple in Jerusalem 2,500 years ago. Come to think of it, why not a Palestinian class action suit against Abraham for buying that plot of land in Hebron where the fathers and mothers of the Jewish people were buried 4,000 years ago? It is as absurd as that. To sue

the British Government for the Balfour Declaration? Is he kidding? And that is taken seriously here?

President Abbas attacked the Balfour Declaration because it recognized the right of the Jewish people to a national home in the land of Israel. When the United Nations supported the establishment of a Jewish State in 1947, it recognized our historical and our moral rights to our homeland. Yet today, nearly 70 years later, the Palestinians still refuse to recognize those rights — not our right to a homeland, not our right to a State, not our right to anything. And that remains the true core of the conflict: the persistent Palestinian refusal to recognize the Jewish State in any boundary. One can see that the conflict is not about the settlements. It never was.

The conflict raged for decades before there was a single settlement, when Judea, Samaria and Gaza were all in Arab hands. The West Bank and Gaza were in Arab hands, and they attacked us again and again and again. And when we uprooted all 21 settlements in Gaza and withdrew from every last inch of Gaza, we did not get peace from Gaza — we got thousands of rockets fired at us from Gaza.

The conflict rages because for the Palestinians the real settlements they are after are Haifa, Jaffa and Tel Aviv. Keep in mind, the issue of settlements is a real one, and it can and must be resolved in final-status negotiations. But this conflict has never been about the settlements, nor about establishing a Palestinian State. It has always been about the existence of a Jewish State, a Jewish State within any boundaries. Israel is ready, as am I, to negotiate all final-status issues. However, one thing I will never negotiate is our right to our State, the one and only Jewish State. Change may be coming sooner than I thought.

Had the Palestinians said yes to a Jewish State in 1947, there would have been no war, no refugees and no conflict. When the Palestinians finally say yes to a Jewish State, we will be able to end our conflict once and for all.

The real tragedy is that the Palestinians are not only trapped in the past, but their leaders are poisoning the future. By way of illustration, I want the Assembly to imagine a day in the life of a 13-year-old Palestinian boy named Ali. Ali wakes up before school and goes to soccer practice with a team named after Dalal Mughrabi, a Palestinian terrorist responsible for the murder of a busload of 37 Israelis. At school, Ali attends an event sponsored by the Palestinian Ministry of Education honouring Baha Alyan, who last year murdered three Israeli civilians.

On his walk home, Ali looks up at a towering statue erected just a few weeks ago by the Palestinian authorities to honour Abu Sukar, who detonated a bomb in the centre of Jerusalem, killing 15 Israelis. When Ali gets home, he turns on the television and sees an interview with a senior Palestinian official, Jibril Rajoub, who says that, if he had a nuclear bomb, he would have detonated it over Israel that very morning.

Ali then turns on the radio, and he hears President Abbas' adviser Sultan Abu al-Einein urging Palestinians to "slit the throats of Israelis wherever you find them". Ali checks his Facebook, and he sees a recent post by President Abbas' Fatah party, calling the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972 a "heroic act". On YouTube, Ali watches a clip of President Abbas himself saying "we welcome every drop of blood spilled in Jerusalem".

Over dinner, Ali asks his mother what would happen if he killed a Jew and went to an Israeli prison. She tells him that he would be paid thousands of dollars each month by the Palestinian authorities. In fact, she tells him that the more Jews he killed, the more money he would get. When he gets out of prison, Ali would be guaranteed a job with the Palestinian authorities.

All of that is not just a story, it is real. It happens every day, all the time. Sadly, Ali represents hundreds of thousands of Palestinian children who are indoctrinated with hate during every moment of every hour. That is child abuse. Imagine if it were our children undergoing such brainwashing. Imagine what it takes for a young boy or girl to break free of such a culture of hate. Some do, but far too many do not.

How can any of us expect young Palestinians to support peace when their leaders poison their minds against peace? In Israel we do not do that; we educate our children for peace. In fact, my Government recently launched a pilot programme to make the study of Arabic mandatory for Jewish children, so that we can better understand each other, and so that we can live together side by side, in peace. Of course, like all societies, Israel has fringe elements. But it is our response to those fringe elements that makes all the difference.

Let us consider the tragic case of Ahmed Dawabsha. I shall never forget visiting Ahmed in the hospital, just hours after he was attacked. This little boy — a baby — was badly burned. Ahmed was the victim of a horrible terrorist attack perpetrated by Jews. He lay bandaged and unconscious as Israeli doctors worked around the clock to save him. No words could bring comfort to this boy or to his family. Nevertheless, as I stood by his bedside, I told his uncle: "This is not our people. This is not our way". I then ordered

extraordinary measures to bring Ahmed's assailants to justice, and today the Jewish citizens of Israel accused of attacking the Dawabsha family are in jail awaiting trial.

For some, that story shows that both sides have their extremists and that both sides are equally responsible for our seemingly endless conflict. However, what Ahmed's story actually proves is the very opposite. It illustrates the profound difference between our two societies. While Israeli leaders condemn terrorists — Arabs and Jews alike — Palestinian leaders celebrate terrorists. While Israel jails the handful of Jewish terrorists among us, the Palestinians pay thousands of terrorists among them.

I therefore call upon President Abbas to tell him that he has a choice to make. He can continue to stoke hatred, as he did today, or he can finally confront hatred and work with me to establish peace between our two peoples. I know that many of you have given up on peace, but I want it to be known that I have not given up on peace.

I remain committed to a vision of peace based on two States, for two peoples. I believe, more than ever before, that changes taking place in the Arab world today offer a unique opportunity to advance that peace. In that connection, I commend President Al Sisi of Egypt for his efforts to advance peace and stability in our region.

Israel welcomes the spirit of the Arab Peace Initiative and welcomes a dialogue with Arab States to advance a broader peace. I believe that, in order for that broader peace to be fully achieved, the Palestinians have to be part of it. I am ready to begin negotiations to achieve that today without any further delay.

Although President Abbas spoke here an hour ago, would it not be better if, instead of speaking past each other, we were speaking to one another? I invite President Abbas to speak to the Israeli people at the Knesset in Jerusalem, instead of railing against Israel at the United Nations in New York. I would gladly come to speak to the Palestinian Parliament in Ramallah.

While Israel seeks peace with all our neighbours, we also know that peace has no greater enemy than the forces of militant Islam. The bloody trail of such fanaticism runs through all the continents represented here. It runs through Paris and Nice, Brussels and Baghdad, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Minnesota and New York. From Sydney to San Bernadino, so many have suffered its savagery: Christians and Jews, women and gays, Yazidis and Kurds and many others.

Yet the heaviest price of all has been paid by innocent Muslims — hundreds of thousands mercilessly slaughtered, millions turned into desperate refugees, tens of millions brutally subjugated. The defeat of militant Islam will therefore be a victory for all humankind. It will especially be a victory for the many Muslims who seek a life without fear — a life of peace, a life of hope.

To defeat the forces of militant Islam, we must fight them relentlessly. We must fight them in the real world. We must fight them in the virtual world. We must dismantle their networks, disrupt their funding channels and discredit their ideology. We can defeat them, and we will defeat them. Medievalism is no match for modernity. Hope is stronger than hate. Freedom is mightier than fear. We can do it.

Israel fights the fateful battle against the forces of militant Islam every day. We keep our borders safe from the Islamic State. We prevent the smuggling of game-changing weapons to Hizbullah in Lebanon. We foil Palestinian terror attacks in the West Bank. We deter missile attacks from Hamas-controlled Gaza.

That is the same Hamas terror organization that cruelly — unbelievably cruelly — refuses to return three of our citizens and the bodies of our fallen soldiers, Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin. Hadar Goldin's parents, Leah and Simcha Goldin, are here with us today. They have one request: to be able to bury their beloved son in Israel. All they ask for is one simple thing: to be able to visit the grave of their fallen son, Hadar, in Israel, but Hamas refuses. Hamas could not care less. I implore everyone to stand with Hadar's parents, with us, with all that is decent in our world against the inhumanity of Hamas, which represents all that is indecent and barbaric. Hamas breaks every humanitarian rule in the book. Throw the book at them.

The greatest threat to my country, to our region and ultimately to our world remains the militant Islamic regime of Iran. Iran openly seeks Israel's annihilation. It threatens countries across the Middle East. It sponsors terror worldwide. This year, Iran has fired ballistic missiles in direct defiance of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). It has expanded its activities in Iraq, Syria and in Yemen. Iran, the world's foremost sponsor of terrorism, continues to build its global terror network. That terror network now spans five continents. My point is as follows: the threat that Iran poses to all of us is not behind us; it is in front of

us. In the coming years, there must be a sustained and united effort to push back against Iran's aggression and terror. With the nuclear constraints on Iran one year closer to being removed, let me be clear: Israel will not allow the terrorist regime in Iran to develop nuclear weapons — not now, not in a decade, not ever.

I stand before the Assembly at a time when Israel's former President Shimon Peres is fighting for his life. Shimon is one of Israel's founding fathers, one of its boldest statesman and one of its most respected leaders. I know that the Assembly will join me and the people of Israel in wishing him a speedy recovery. I have always admired Shimon's boundless optimism. Like him, I am filled with hope.

I am filled with hope because Israel is capable of defending itself by itself against any threat. I am filled with hope because the valour of our fighting men and women is second to none. I am filled with hope because I know that the forces of civilization will ultimately triumph over the forces of terror. I am filled with hope because in the age of innovation, Israel, the innovation nation, is thriving like never before. I am filled with hope because Israel works tirelessly to advance equality and opportunity for all its citizens: Jews, Muslims, Christians, Druze, everyone. I am filled with hope because despite all the doubters, I believe that in the years ahead Israel will forge a lasting peace with all our neighbours.

I am hopeful about what Israel can accomplish because I have seen what Israel has accomplished. In 1948, the year of Israel's independence, our population was 800,000. Our main export was oranges. People said that we were too small, too weak, too isolated and too demographically outnumbered to survive, let alone thrive. The sceptics were wrong about Israel then, and the sceptics are wrong about Israel now. Israel's population has grown tenfold. Our economy has grown fortyfold. Today, our biggest export is technology. Israeli technology powers the world's computers, cell phones, cars and so much more.

The future belongs to those who innovate, and that is why the future belongs to countries like Israel. Israel wants to form partnerships in seizing that future, and so I call on all those present to embrace Israel, to cooperate and dream with Israel. Dream of the future that we can build together — a future of breathtaking progress, a future of security, prosperity and peace, a future of hope for all humankind, a future where even at the United Nations, even in this Hall, Israel will finally, inevitably, take its rightful place among the nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the State of Israel for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Serge Telle, Head of Government of the Principality of Monaco

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of Government of the Principality of Monaco.

Mr. Serge Telle, Head of Government of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Serge Telle, Head of Government of the Principality of Monaco, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Telle (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): As we have been hearing since the beginning of the week, we are here as representatives of a world in crisis, a war-torn world, divided by inequality, shocked by ever-increasing massive population displacements, afflicted by hunger and disease, and torn apart and grief-stricken by violence. We are also the representatives of a world threatened by global warming, made vulnerable by attacks on biodiversity, and concerned at new dangers such as ocean acidification and the melting of the permafrost.

We are doubly responsible for the situation of the world. We are responsible as human beings, because the tragedy has but one perpetrator — humans and their insatiable hunger for power. From the depletion of farmland to the flooding of land swallowed up by rising water levels and cities flattened by bombs, it is always the same quest for power that is the cause of global violence, which is why we are all responsible.

But we are also here as leaders of nations who are responsible for the world's future. It is up to us and the General Assembly to find responses to the suffering, injustice and other concerns. For 71 years, the United Nations has shown that it is capable of taking up those problems and offering the world sustainable solutions

based on peace and cooperation. Over the past 10 years, under the stewardship of the Secretary-General, to whom I pay tribute, the United Nations has been at the forefront of all of the fights. Thanks to the Secretary-General, significant progress has been made on sustainable development with the adoption one year ago of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the adoption in December last year of a major agreement on climate change, the Paris Agreement.

Those accomplishments should inspire us today and strengthen our determination. In the face of the contradictions that we face in the world, the United Nations, I would note, is the only forum where coherent global action is possible. It is the only place where conflicting interests can have a peaceful encounter in a spirit of progress. It is the only place where responsibility for humankind can be upheld over the ambition of individuals. Here, and nowhere else, humankind has a meeting with history, with destiny and with the judgment that our children will pronounce on its actions.

The Principality of Monaco, under the impetus of its sovereign Prince, Prince Albert II, is fully committed to multilateralism as the only way of tackling the topics on our agenda. I would like to mention three such issues that encompass most of the world's challenges.

The first is of course the issue of refugees and migrants, a topic that took up a large part of the beginning of the work of the current session of the General Assembly. All of us here are familiar with the tragedy that has afflicted so many civilian populations, primarily in Africa and the Middle East, and we know all too well the situation of the Syrian population, the 300,000 victims of the conflict and the tragedy of the survivors, caught in the middle of the violence committed by the State and the atrocities of the terrorists. Every month, every week, every day, the Mediterranean becomes the funeral shroud of dozens of women, children and men ready to risk everything to escape their fate, but for whom we can barely provide the little that they ask for — safety, subsistence and the hope of a better future.

That Mediterranean Sea, to which Monaco attaches great importance, the Sea that is both a link and a border to so many worlds, is once again at the heart of one of the main challenges of this new century. The Mediterranean today should help us understand that the tragedies on its shores are not those of different clashing worlds but rather the shores of the same world, ours. Regardless of our material situation or where we live, we cannot escape Earth's and humankind's woes. Whether we are dealing with wars or rising water levels, famines, storms or fanaticism, our interdependence is, from here on out, total. To quote John Donne, "Send not to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee."

That is the purpose of the United Nations and its Charter — to proclaim our common humanity, whatever difficulties may arise. In that regard, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1), which has just been adopted, fortunately recalls the principles according to which we must act, as well as the moral and legal obligations that we must all comply with. In that connection, we must give special consideration to unaccompanied minors and children separated from their families. Furthermore, many people live in damaged ecosystems that threaten their very existence. According to the most recent projections of the United Nations, there may be as many as 250 million climate refugees by 2050. Therefore, environmental degradation could tomorrow become the primary cause of migration. Hence, the importance of protecting our environment and implementing sustainable development for all. That represents a major commitment for Monaco and our Sovereign Prince Albert II, who for more than 20 years has been personally committed to that issue, both in all international forums where those subjects were addressed and in the field, working closely with affected populations.

Reconciling the imperatives of human development and those of the conservation of the Earth so as to make it possible for a population of 8 or 9 billion people in a few years to live together will be the major challenge of our century. In order to achieve that, we must first protect the climate.

The Paris Agreement, for which the Principality campaigned, represents a milestone. Monaco will become party to that Agreement by the end of 2016, once its National Council has adopted the law for its ratification. I also recall that Monaco is committed to reducing its greenhouse-gas emissions by 50 per cent by 2030 as compared with emission levels in 1990.

Despite its small responsibility for global emissions, our country has the ambition to be a leader in using innovative means of transport and energy consumption.

In addition to preserving our common heritage and to limiting pollution, the use of inexhaustible renewable energy will also allow us to break with certain monopolies that generate inequalities today and destabilize our world. Such a programme of energy transfer has a cost, but we are convinced that that cost is small compared to the consequences of inaction. That is why Monaco is committed to maintaining its support for the Green Climate Fund.

Global warming has several tragic consequences. One of them is related to the situation of the oceans. As we know, the sea surfaces have been severely neglected, even though they are critical for our common future. Monaco has a long-standing commitment to that issue, dating back to Prince Albert I, who was one of the founders of modern oceanography over 100 years ago. Since then, the Principality has taken action whenever the future of our seas was at stake. It did so in 2009, when it hosted 150 international scientists, who signed the Monaco Declaration, the first global warning about the acidification of the oceans. It also acted by taking on various targeted initiatives within the competent bodies, such as the one that made it possible for us to save bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean. It also acted through the appeal, launched by Prince Albert II at the General Assembly in 2013, aimed at including what became Sustainable Development Goal 14 on the oceans in the 2030 Agenda. It continues to take action, month after month, by contributing to the development of protected coastal marine areas and to the future establishment of a network of protected areas on the high seas.

We are convinced that such conservation solutions will bring about extremely positive effects for the ecosystems and the populations that are directly or potentially affected. Similarly, the Principality of Monaco has taken action in the very important negotiations that are taking place today at the United Nations on issues of biodiversity and national jurisdiction.

All of those issues are essential for the Principality of Monaco. All of those issues take into account a primordial concern, which is the creation of our common future. It was through their ability to dominate and transform nature that our ancestors were able to develop and secure the future of their children. However, we must now also admit that it is through our capacity to protect nature and accept its rules that we can realize our potential and build a future for humankind. That change in the model disrupts our ways of thinking. It will take time for it to take hold and to replace the traditional ways of thinking that have shaped our world and its inhabitants for millenniums.

What we need to do today is to bring about a change of civilization. However, we can make progress in that direction only if all of humankind comes along with us with its dreams and desires. The *2016 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report* also highlights a priority — that of education. Forty per cent of 15-year-old children have basic knowledge of environmental issues. That brings me to the third issue for our Organization that I would like to underscore today before the Assembly.

More than ever, UNICEF, which is celebrating its seventieth anniversary this year, should play a central role in solving the world's problems, many of which relate to women and children. At a time when women are still subjected to so much violence and discrimination and when sexual violence is increasing in such an unacceptable way, we should also support the crucial work of UNICEF. In that respect, I would also like to reiterate the full support of the Principality of Monaco for the Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security, on the protection of women in times of conflict and the strengthening of their role in peacekeeping, restoring peace and building of peace. In our unstable and unjust world, we know that education, especially that of girls, is the solution to many of the problems we face. It is through women that the values of tolerance and respect can be upheld. That is why the education of girls and, more broadly, the equal education of all children should be a priority for all.

The power of the United Nations lies in bringing States together to work in the service of the common good. That common good is today still high on the agenda of the Assembly. We must better manage refugees and migrants by protecting the planet and through education for children and the establishment of a genuine equality between men and women. That is the path that Monaco will follow. Loyal to its values, its history and its commitments, the Principality of Monaco will continue, with determination, to move forward along that path, together with the entire international community, for a better future.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the

Head of Government of the Principality of Monaco for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Serge Telle, Head of Government of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Tammam Salam, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic.

Mr. Tammam Salam, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Tammam Salam, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate the President on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. Allow me also to thank Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for his tireless efforts throughout his presidency during the seventieth session. I would also like to extend special thanks to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. We thank him for his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/71/1) and for the high priority that he has given to the issues of the Middle East and Lebanon.

I take this opportunity to reiterate Lebanon's commitment to assuming its role in achieving the lofty goals of the Organization. My country had the honour to have been among its founding Members. Foremost among those goals is the maintenance of peace and security, the promotion of world peace, securing the right of peoples to self-determination and ensuring respect for human rights.

In 2016 we have witnessed tremendous international efforts to mobilize goodwill, reduce the number of armed conflicts and strengthen communities. Such efforts have come about either under the auspices or with the contribution of the United Nations, with the goal of improving the international community's ability to meet the unprecedented challenges that are the mark of our era. Perhaps the most noble milestones were the signing by 175 States of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which took place in April, and the holding of the World Humanitarian Summit, which was held in Istanbul in May.

Lebanon emphasizes the need to reactivate and revitalize the role of the General Assembly so as to make it more effective in addressing issues of concern to the whole of humankind. Lebanon laments that the Security Council has repeatedly failed to address the conflicts raging in many countries, particularly in the Middle East. Lebanon stresses the importance of reforming the Security Council in a way that would reflect the latest political, economic and demographic realities emerging in our world.

My country is undergoing a severe political crisis, the most salient aspect of which is the inability of Parliament for the past two and a half years to elect a President of the Republic. The crisis has led to the near paralysis of the legislative authorities and the slowdown of the work of the executive branch. It has also had negative repercussions on our economic situation.

All countries that consider themselves brothers and friends of Lebanon — all those who are familiar with the Lebanese scene — are well aware of the specificities of the political situation in my country and the extent to which it is influenced by external factors. The main external factor has been sharp regional polarization, which has turned into an open conflict in the entire region. Realism compels us to recognize that the solution to the problem of the presidential vacancy is not just in the hands of the Lebanese. I therefore call on all of Lebanon's friends and supporters and all who are keen to avoid the emergence of a new area of tension in the Middle East to help the Lebanese elect a President of the country. The election of a new President will help rebalance our constitutional institutions and protect the Lebanese model of coexistence, which is the last surviving model based on plurality in the Levant.

We reiterate that the distressing war in Syria has produced a displacement crisis that has imposed an unbearable burden on Lebanon that exceeds our capacities. My country, with its limited surface area, is hosting numbers of displaced Syrians equivalent to one third of our population. We are shouldering our humanitarian duty towards those people with our limited resources and with insufficient support from the international community. We are disappointed with the level of international response to our needs as a host country — a response that is not commensurate with

the pledges made or the goodwill expressed on so many occasions.

Lebanon cannot and will not assimilate additional displaced persons. Lebanon urges the United Nations to craft an overarching vision for resettling displaced Syrians living in our territory in areas inside Syria and for working with the parties concerned to turn such a vision into a workable plan at the earliest possible time. As we await the realization of that plan, we stress once more the temporary character of the Syrian presence in Lebanon. Let me declare that Lebanon is not a country of permanent asylum. Lebanon is the homeland of the Lebanese and only the Lebanese.

Lebanon continues to suffer from the threat of terrorism. Lebanon is engaged in an open confrontation with terrorism — a confrontation for which we have paid dearly with the lives of our soldiers, civilians and children. We declare a commitment to fight the scourge in all its forms. We stress the importance of regional and international cooperation in that fight.

We believe that the isolationist tendencies of some communities — retreating behind separation walls with the unhealthy encouragement of Islamophobia — are aimed at an Islam that is being deceitfully brandished and branded by terrorists to justify their crimes. Such isolationist tendencies do not represent a panacea against terrorism. Rather, they are a recipe for the emergence of violent, extremist and racist tendencies, which have been rejected by advanced democracies for a long time. Combating terrorism is a long-term process that requires major efforts at all levels. A precondition for the successful elimination of the terrorist phenomenon lies in eradicating its roots and the contributing factors that fuel it. We ought to address deprivation and injustice, which are the incubators of extremism, by meeting the legitimate demands of people for freedom, dignity and equality and by rejecting all forms of violence and exclusion.

On the tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), Lebanon reiterates its commitment to that resolution with all its provisions. Once again, Lebanon calls on the international community to compel Israel to cease its violations of Lebanese sovereignty, to fully cooperate with the United Nations peacekeeping forces and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, to demarcate what is left of the Blue Line and to withdraw from the northern part of Ghajar, the Shaba'a farmlands and the Kfar Shouba Hills.

Lebanon reiterates its strong determination to safeguard its full rights over its water and natural resources, including oil and gas, within its exclusive economic zone. Lebanon called on the Secretary-General, during his visit to Beirut last March, to make use of his good offices in resolving the issue of the delimitation of the exclusive economic zone between Lebanon and Israel. We look forward to his heightened role in that area.

We condemn Israel's continuing occupation of the Palestinian land and its blockade of the Gaza Strip, as well as its obstruction of the efforts to rebuild what was destroyed by the Israeli aggression in the summer of 2014. We call for the principle of legal accountability to be applied in the case of the war crimes committed by Israel, to prevent those crimes from going unpunished.

We hold Israel responsible for foiling all attempts to reach a peaceful settlement, and we stress the need for a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, and the Arab Peace Initiative. We furthermore stress the right of Palestinian refugees to return home, pursuant to international resolutions.

At this very moment, as I speak before the Assembly, a major cycle of violence continues to rage in the Arab Levant, causing the destruction of homes and livelihoods, hospitals and places of worship. Communities are being uprooted from their homelands and hurled into the abyss of an unknown future. Great cities are being razed to the ground and erased from the map without any consideration for their historical importance, or indeed their human heritage value.

We renew our call to all influential Powers to cease procrastinating and hesitating and to assume their responsibilities by acting with determination to stop the bloodshed and restore security and stability in our region. We appeal to everyone to join wholeheartedly and effectively in the fight against obscurantist terrorism. We warn against the dangers of tampering with maps, demolishing existing entities and changing the demographic nature of communities or threatening their social cohesion and religious diversity.

We believe that the main prerequisite for consolidating stability and eliminating hotbeds of extremism in the Middle East is to meet the just demands of the people to live independently, with dignity and freedom, and to find a just solution to the Palestinian cause. We would like to stress the importance of establishing peaceful relations among the countries of the region, based on good-neighbourliness, respect for the sovereignty of other countries and the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs. We call for the promotion of the culture of peace and dialogue to protect the oases of diversity in the Levant.

Amid the violent maelstrom that is sweeping across the Levant, where everything is in flux and endless waves of displaced persons are leaving their homes and communities, a small entity called Lebanon stands firm against the aftershocks of the crisis that is tearing everything apart around it, and offers the world a model other than that which is intended to prove the inability of our region to tolerate the possibility of coexistence among different entities.

Lebanon is a shining star, an example of affinity among various affiliations and a model totally opposed to the notion of a single-colour racist State that rejects all other shades. It is a laboratory of partnership at a time when sects, nationalities and ethnicities are fighting one another and populations are fleeing their countries. Yet that model is suffering from political weakness and needs the world to offer it a helping hand. Meanwhile, the Lebanese people will remain in the heart of the oppressed Levant — firmly committed to living together in one unified State.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tammam Salam, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Haider Al Abadi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq.

Mr. Haider Al Abadi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Haider Al Abadi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Al Abadi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): A year ago, as I stood at this rostrum (A/70/PV.21), large areas of Iraqi territory were occupied by the terrorist organization Da'esh. Today, as we stand here again, we are able to declare before the General Assembly that Iraq is being liberated and that Iraqis have been able to free most of their land and towns, thanks to their unity and determination. Currently we are in the process of liberating Ninawa, the last province controlled by Da'esh, where we have regained major areas. We shall complete its liberation by the end of the year.

Let me report that today our heroic forces liberated the city of Al-Sharqat in Salahaddin province and other neighbouring areas and major towns. That is testimony to the great confidence and capabilities of our forces, who enjoy the full support of the local residents. I commend all of the valiant soldiers who are working to liberate peaceful Iraq from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We have declared 2016 as a year of liberation and victory. Our fundamental goal is to liberate our people and the land and to save the civilians from ISIL, which has ruined all aspects of life and destroyed archaeological monuments of the ancient civilization of Mesopotamia.

Assisted by our friends in the international community, we have started to implement programmes for the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to the liberated areas. In that context, we developed an integrated programme for stabilization and the provision of services, particularly water, electricity, schools and hospitals. We call on the international community to provide further support for sheltering and returning IDPs, especially in the light of the forthcoming battle to fully liberate Ninawa and the anticipated increase in the number of displaced persons. We thank all those who have stood beside our people in the face of economic and security challenges, and we look forward to further support and collaboration.

We would commend the United Nations system for providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq and for its role in addressing IDP issues. We applaud the support extended by the States of the international coalition aimed at tackling terrorism, as well as of friendly countries. We commend the World Bank, the

International Monetary Fund and other international organizations for supporting the plans and efforts of the Iraqi Government to reform the Iraqi economy, overcome the financial crisis and fight corruption in all its forms. We greatly appreciate the constructive position of the Group of Seven States and thank the donors conference for the reconstruction of Iraq recently held in Washington, D.C.

In the area of economic and financial reforms, the Government implemented an ambitious reform programme to reduce government expenditure, despite having to spend more to support the war against terrorism. As part of its administrative reforms, the Government initiated the restructuring of many State institutions. It prioritized citizens' services by streamlining procedures, removing many obstacles, simplifying the procedures to deal with citizens' affairs and removing impediments to investment. The Government also strengthened procedures for creating private-sector partnerships and had a good measure of success in that regard.

As for fighting corruption, we have signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme to benefit from international expertise to aid Iraq in capacity-building to fight corruption. The past few weeks have seen practical steps in that regard. We look forward to making more progress in fighting terrorism and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

We look forward to the day when Iraq and the whole region are free of the criminal acts perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). But we will be satisfied only when the whole world becomes free from terrorism that threatens our peoples and nations. This requires serious collaboration to contain terrorism, cut off its ideological and financial resources and dismantle its networks and recruitment hubs all over the world. Without such cooperation, terrorism will spread everywhere, giving rise to increased numbers of refugees fleeing conflict areas. Those numbers have already reached unprecedentedly high levels.

We assure Member States that ISIL is indisputably a greater enemy of Islam than of other faiths. ISIL has murdered thousands of Muslims, wrought destruction and spread its evil to many Arab and Islamic States. It has been active in capitals and cities worldwide — killing and terrorizing civilians in France, Belgium, Germany, the United States of America, Russia and elsewhere. We have no choice but to cooperate to win the war against these evil terrorists. We deem any victory achieved against ISIL anywhere in the world to be a global triumph.

The danger of the formation of terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaida or Da'esh ISIL will not end until we address the problem of their radical ideology. These backward groups rely on sectarian segregation and hostility towards all other faiths and beliefs, and their ideology is fuelled by a short-sighted vision that has hindered national development opportunities. If we are to combat this pernicious scourge, which has spread among some young people and exploited their feelings of disaffection and despair, countries and organizations must take a determined stand. They must review the programmes and curriculums of educational institutions and address feelings of frustration, with a view to absorbing disaffected young people into the mainstream of society. Any attempts by such terrorist organizations to re-establish themselves in future must be pre-empted.

ISIL, which falsely claims that it is defending Sunnis, has so far killed Shiites, Sunnis, Christians, Yazidis, Arabs, Kurds and Turkmens, and Shabak as well. Their atrocities have been directed at the entire ethnic spectrum of Iraq and involved takfir, displacement, female enslavement, genocide and the destruction of antiquities, mosques and churches. Such heinous crimes were perpetrated against cities, such as Amerly, Sinjar, Taza, Anbar, Mosul, Salahuddin and Diyala, and against the victims of the Camp Speicher massacre, not to mention the cowardly terrorist attacks on civilians in the districts of Baghdad and the rest of Iraq's provinces.

Iraq encountered two external factors that affected stability and economic and social growth. Apart from terrorism, we have had to face the global decline in oil prices, which caused a budget loss amounting to 70 per cent of revenues, in addition to the burden of increased military and security expenditures to free Iraqi cities from terrorism and to rebuild them. It was only natural that this would negatively impact development, investment and reconstruction plans. Despite all these daunting challenges, we continued to implement our comprehensive reform programme and to combat the corruption that corrodes our State agencies and social institutions. From the outset, we realized that this reform programme would be no less difficult and dangerous than tackling terrorism. However, we are determined

that it will be implemented despite all the challenges. We are confident that we can win the battle of reforms, just as we won the battle to liberate our lands.

We and our people stand together shoulder to shoulder in our fight against terrorism and corruption. We are working together to build a State that is based on peaceful coexistence and respect for religious, ideological and sectarian diversity, guided by the values and principles of justice and equality. Each Iraqi contributes to the victory achieved in the fight against ISIL. It is a national and non-conventional, existential battle, involving all the Iraqi people. Our armed forces, federal and local police, the popular mobilization forces, the tribal mobilization forces and the Peshmerga forces represent all religions, ethnicities and sects; they share one goal, namely, to defend our homeland and its sacred values. Our religious leader, His Eminence the Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Sistani, supported this defence. His historic fatwa led to a broad-based mobilization of the entire Iraqi people, and religious leaders and clergy of all religious creeds in Iraq widely embraced and supported the fatwa.

Iraq is keen to participate alongside all countries in advancing development efforts and attaining the Sustainable Development Goals — combating poverty and discrimination, protecting the environment, enhancing child-care programmes and improving standards of health and education. Our intent is to create an environment that promotes freedom, human rights, equality and the vitally important participation of women in the State and society.

We call on nations worldwide to commit to implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions on preventing support to, financing or arming terrorist groups that kill civilians, as well as General Assembly resolutions on safeguarding Iraq's cultural heritage. Thanks to a cooperative effort between Iraq and UNESCO, the wetland areas of southern Iraq have now been added to the list of World Heritage sites. We are also keen to meet the inclusion requirements for the rest of the cultural sites and treasures of Iraq's ancient civilization.

We take this opportunity to call on the international community to exert efforts to end conflicts, prevent wars, support peace and security, encourage development opportunities and reject policies involving interference in the internal affairs of other States. Such policies result in more suffering among our peoples and deeper divisions in our region, which continues to be racked by internal wars and external interventions that have made our civilian populations ever more miserable.

We appeal to the international community to support and respect Iraq's sovereignty and to demand that Turkey withdraw its forces from our territory, where their continued presence, despite the fact that Iraqis have rejected it, is an obstacle to our efforts to liberate Ninawa.

The Iraqi Government is working hard to help the Iraqi people live in peaceful coexistence with one another and to treat all citizens equally on a basis of good citizenship, regardless of their religion, sect or ethnicity. We would like to reiterate our gratitude to the United Nations and our friends for their support to Iraq and the Iraqi people through their various humanitarian programmes aimed at caring for displaced people and refugees. We also thank them for their support of the Iraqi Government's efforts to achieve security and stability and the reforms and economic development that our people aspire to.

We would like to congratulate the President on his election to lead the Assembly at its seventy-first session. We would also like to thank Mr. Lykketoft for his leadership at the seventieth session, and to warmly congratulate the Secretary-General on the forthcoming conclusion of his term of office at the end of this year. We pay tribute to him for his excellent stewardship of the United Nations. He has visited Iraq many times, and we thank him for his support of our development plans.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Haider Al Abadi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Albert Koenders, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Mr. Koenders (Netherlands): Before I came here, Sahar Afzal, a representative of Dutch youth, asked me a simple question. "Minister," he said, "do you still believe in the United Nations?" That question made me think. A plain and simple yes is the answer one would probably expect from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, a nation with a strong tradition of cooperation, dialogue and partnership and a

founding Member of the United Nations, with an active commitment to peace, justice and development. But my answer was not that simple. The English art critic Clive Bell wrote that while we believe, what we believe is not necessarily true. There can be a lot of wishful thinking in believing something. Believing is not always enough. It is what we do that matters. And so it is when we look at the United Nations, as the world's premier global multilateral organization.

There is widespread agreement that the United Nations needs to reassert and transform itself, and I think that is correct. The challenges are enormous; according to some, the world is at a tipping point. And the outlook is indeed gloomy. Geopolitical fault lines are deepening. Shifts in the global economy are fuelling tension and uncertainty. Growth has stagnated. Inequality within and among countries has grown. Worldwide, the number of refugees is the highest it has been since the founding of the United Nations. Promising democracy movements have turned into bloody conflicts, and new wars have broken out, the most tragic examples being the conflict in Syria and the brutal extremism of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Terrorism has taken a deadly toll in many places around the world, including on my continent, Europe. Violence against women in war zones and elsewhere is a scourge.

There is no denying it — too many people in the world have drawn the short straw. In a world of globalization, climate change and conflict, they are losing out. The longer we permit that to go on, the further we drift from the inclusive United Nations ideal of "we the peoples". Not "we, some people", but "we the peoples". Will we be able to strengthen our positive forces, or will we let the negative forces tear the world apart? At this pivotal moment in history, the United Nations and the other institutions that were built to bring us together must be strong enough to prevent that from happening. But are they? The idea of unstoppable, progressive global integration has lost its aura of inevitability. On my own continent, the process of European cooperation is being debated. In many places inside and outside Europe, ghosts of the past have come back to haunt us — nationalism and xenophobia. And when I see the kinds of stories about the United Nations that are being reported in my own country, the Netherlands — which has traditionally been a very strong supporter — I realize that the United Nations is too often seen as helpless and fragmented, an overwhelmed Organization struggling to cope with the challenges it faces.

And yet the United Nations has no choice but to play a key role in delivering solutions, now and in future, in order to make the world safer, more just and better prepared for what the future brings. There is no alternative. The United Nations is the best imperfect global Organization we have, the only global Organization that embodies the principles of multilateralism — legitimacy, universality and standard-setting authority and that has not only convening power, which is very important, but also the ability to deliver services on a global scale.

What must be done? As the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and, only this week, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1) have shown, the United Nations remains the one legitimate institution where international goals and ambitions are set and where we can agree on new global challenges. But now is the time for implementation. We must walk the talk. I know that implementation is not always very sexy. It does not often make headlines. It is not usually accompanied by Angélique Kidjo or Shakira singing onstage, as they did last year in this very Hall during the magnificent adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. But implementation is necessary to deliver on the goals we set, and it is necessary for the Organization to remain relevant and credible — to survive.

That is why I believe that a shift from outcome documents to action and execution should be the top priority of both the United Nations membership and the new Secretary-General. The new Secretary-General should be an "Implementer-General", working on the basis of a twenty-first-century vision of global cooperation. There is plenty of work to do. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is leaving his successor an impressive body of standards, objectives and recommendations, and the Netherlands is grateful for his enormous leadership during a very difficult period. The new Secretary-General can hit the ground running and boost further implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, of peacekeeping and peacebuilding reform, including real zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as the very important issue of reform of the United Nations development system.

But the Secretary-General cannot do it alone. The membership must shoulder its responsibilities. At a time of so many false notes, we need to work on our global orchestra. Maybe the States Members of the United Nations should declare a moratorium on new and lofty outcome documents until we have delivered on the commitments and promises made in the ones that we already have adopted. Let us pause in the talk for a while and get the action going for the people whom we represent.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is ready to support the new Secretary-General in a drive for implementation. Implementation is not just technique; it is mastering the political will to get things done. We have made a good start with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in our own country. We look forward to sharing our national voluntary presentation with the membership next summer. Globally, we are committed to an integrated approach to peace and security, development and human rights that leaves no one behind. The Netherlands is a top-10 humanitarian donor, a supporter of and a contributor to peacekeeping. We will ratify the Paris Agreement on Climate Change shortly. We would like the migration compact and the refugee compact provided for in the New York Declaration on Migrants and Refugees to be clear and actionable.

United Nations reform needs to pick up steam now. The Security Council continues to fulfil a crucial role, imperfect as it may be. But it is no longer 1945. The Council is simply not representative enough. We need to devise a way to fix that shortcoming before it is too late, even if it means thinking outside the box. As the Assembly may recall, I have suggested that a Council seat be assigned to the European Union in due course, and I invite other regions to also reflect on collective regional representation on the Council.

The right of the veto should not render the Security Council powerless, especially when — as we see every day, including this week — mass atrocities are being committed. Council members should be more conscious of their responsibilities and be held more accountable if they block action against breaches of international humanitarian law. Last year's important reviews — and I think they were very important — of peace operations and peacebuilding underline the primacy of political solutions and of sustaining the peace. I could not agree more.

More focus on conflict prevention is also needed. Indeed, this community has been underlining the need for conflict prevention for 50 years. Successful preventive diplomacy can keep situations of concern from spiralling out of control. It can keep cases from being added to the Council's agenda; once a case is taken up by the Security Council — let us face it — we in a sense have already collectively failed. We need to make sure that there are sufficient resources for political missions, mediation and other preventive actions. In its recent report, the Independent Commission on Multilateralism recommends a fundraising drive for prevention. While that is an admirable suggestion, I would say that what is needed is not fundraising for prevention, but budgeting for prevention. If we agree that conflict prevention is crucial to the mandate of the United Nations, then we must devote sufficient resources to it from the regular budget, through assessed contributions by all Member States and not just through the extrabudgetary generosity of a few. That may require a thorough review and reprioritization of the way in which budget resources are allocated at the United Nations.

The points that I am making are part of an integrated approach that my country has long advocated, including during our previous term on the Security Council. We intend to pursue that approach during our 2018 Council term as well. Conflicts cannot be resolved unless the root causes are addressed. Peace, justice and development are closely interlinked and should not be dealt with in isolation. The Peacebuilding Fund, which was established in 2005, is a good example of an integrated approach to sustaining peace, as the great pledging conference that we held yesterday illustrates. I am pleased to say that, earlier this week, the Netherlands pledged €10 million to the Fund. The growing recognition of the importance of accountability is another example. There can be no durable peace without justice and respect for human rights. Tomorrow I will deposit the instrument of ratification of the Kampala amendments to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court on the crime of aggression.

Other Security Council priorities for the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 2018 include the protection of civilians and addressing the peace and security implications of climate change. As a Kingdom consisting of one low-lying country, the Netherlands, and three small Caribbean island countries, Aruba,

Curacao and Sint Maarten, that is an issue of particular concern to us.

Fortunately, the grim tableau that I sketched a moment ago is not the whole picture. There has been genuine and significant progress. In the past 20 years, the percentage of people living in extreme poverty has been halved. That was one of the Millennium Development Goals, which we achieved well before the 2015 deadline. I remember that many of us in this Hall believed that that would not be possible. Well, that Goal was reached.

Sometimes lightning does strike twice. The international community has reached agreement on the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030. Another major achievement and a victory for diplomacy in a time of so much strife is the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. With the recent ratifications by China and the United States, there is a real prospect that it will enter into force, hopefully before Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon leaves office at the end of this year. That is in large part his legacy, and we commend Mr. Ban Ki-moon for it.

And, yes, there have also been positive developments in the area of security. New and important work has been undertaken to stop foreign terrorist fighters from travelling to conflict zones, to halt the financing of terrorism, to impose sanctions on ISIS, and to work in communities on deradicalization and local support, putting together hard and soft security. The Netherlands, together with Morocco, is trying to do its part as co-Chair of the Global Counterterrorism Forum. Preventing violent extremism is now also high on our United Nations agenda, thanks to the Secretary-General's plan of action.

And, yes, peacekeeping has evolved and has been transformed from traditional ceasefire monitoring missions into very complex missions with integrated mandates. More attention is being paid to the entire spectrum of peacekeeping, from early warning and prevention to peacebuilding in the fragile post-conflict period. And more consideration is being given to the protection of civilians — the goal of peacekeeping missions — including the tackling of gender and sexual abuse and the important task of establishing the rule of law.

That is not just theory or statistics. Ask the 12,000 people who sought refuge at the United Nations compound in Bor, South Sudan. Head of Mission Ken Payumo had the courage to let them in and protect them. Ask the women of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where, thanks to the gender unit in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission, sexual violence has decreased substantially since 2013. Ask the people of Nepal, where, in 2006, the United Nations helped the Seven-Party Alliance to sustain the peaceful solution to the conflict.

Allow me to briefly go back to the previous term of the Netherlands on the Security Council. Our first meeting was on Sunday, 2 January 1999, when the Council convened an emergency meeting in the afternoon. A United Nations-chartered plane had just been shot down in war-ravaged Angola. United Nations personnel were being held hostage by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola. Two decades later, Angola has seen substantial improvements; it is currently a non-permanent member of the Council. Or take Sierra Leone, another country that was frequently on the Council's agenda that year. The international community helped to broker a peace agreement and put in place a large peacekeeping operation. In 2004, a United Nations-backed war crimes court, located in the Netherlands, began trying senior leaders on both sides of the conflict. Sierra Leone now has a democratically elected President and, with international support, is emerging from the recent Ebola crisis.

In all these cases, we can see the results of hard work, sustained effort and prolonged investment by the international community. Those are results that should make us proud and hopeful. But such successes soon fade from the public mind when they are replaced by images of children suffering the trauma of wars for which they are not responsible. We cannot deny that there have been peace and security failures. The list has the power to shock: Rwanda, Srebrenica. Now it includes Yemen and, of course, Syria, with Aleppo as a terrifying symbol.

The number-one priority now is to restore the cessation of hostilities and ensure humanitarian access. I call upon the parties most closely involved to do everything in their power to make that happen as soon as possible. And I call upon them, as I have done before, to ensure proper and transparent monitoring of any such cessation of hostilities. If non-compliance becomes the norm, how can we expect Syrians to trust the international community and to put their faith in the United Nations system?

In resolution 2254 (2015), the Security Council unanimously expressed its support for a nationwide ceasefire in Syria. If violence continues to be the norm, I urge the Council not to remain silent. Like my French colleague, I wish to ensure better monitoring and follow-up when a ceasefire is breached. At the International Syria Support Group, which will meet this afternoon, we will call for more qualitative and transparent monitoring and for the systematic violations of ceasefires to be dealt with by the Security Council.

At the same time, let us not forget the primacy of politics. While we work frantically to relieve the tragic humanitarian situation, work on a political transition plan for Syria should go ahead, since only a political solution can end the horrific tragedy. We wholeheartedly support the outstanding efforts by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura, and others to that end.

What is the value of the United Nations and where is its credibility if we talk about the responsibility to protect but are not capable of resolving the Syrian conflict or ready to answer the call by the High Commissioner for Human Rights for an independent international investigation into serious human rights violations in Yemen?

In conclusion, what we do matters greatly. That is why I have stressed the need for an era of genuine implementation under the guidance of an "Implementer-General". But how we talk about the United Nations also matters. By that I mean we must tell the real story, the whole story. We should not simply paint the usual gloomy picture of a powerless United Nations. We need to counter the entrenched view that the Organization is simply a burden to be borne and a scapegoat for our failures. The United Nations can be greater than the sum of its parts only if we allow it to be. And we must — there is too much at stake.

Finally, let me return to the question that I was asked: do I still believe in the United Nations? My answer was yes, but only if we show the determination and resolve of which the Charter speaks. The agenda is clear. The goals have been set. Now is the time to implement and deliver.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands will continue to do its part and will remain a steadfast supporter of the United Nations and its institutions, as it has been since the Organization's inception. It is with that in mind that we are cooperating closely with Italy to prepare for membership of the Security Council.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See.

Cardinal Parolin (Holy See): Last year, in his address in this Hall, His Holiness Pope Francis defined the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as "an important sign of hope" (A/70/PV.3, *p. 4*). Just a few days ago, he reiterated his appreciation for the actions taken last year by the United Nations, encouraging all to put those ambitious objectives into practice, and saying that

> "[t]he protection of our common home requires a growing global political consensus. Along these lines, I am gratified that, in September 2015, the nations of the world adopted the Sustainable Development Goals and that, in December 2015, they approved the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which sets the demanding yet fundamental goal of halting the rising of the global temperature. Now Governments are obliged to honour the commitments they made, while businesses must also responsibly do their part. It is up to citizens to insist that this happen and indeed to advocate for even more ambitious goals."

The achievement of the 2030 Agenda involves an important assumption of responsibility on the part of Governments and the commitment of all, for the common good. This commitment entails recognizing the need to strive not only for great macroeconomic goals but for outcomes that are specific, lasting and equitably distributed. Without a stable financial situation, lasting investments and a commercial appraisal that favours internal growth, however, the 2030 Agenda will be impossible to achieve. Pope Francis has emphasized that

> "[e]conomics and politics and society and culture cannot be dominated by thinking only of the short-term and immediate financial or electoral gains. Instead, they urgently need to be redirected to the common good, which includes sustainability and care for creation. One concrete case is the 'ecological debt' between the global north and south. Repaying it would require treating the environments of poorer nations with care and providing the financial resources and technical

assistance needed to help them deal with climate change and promote sustainable development."

We always must remember that development — especially integral human development — cannot be imposed. Men and women, as individuals, must be the principal agents of the 2030 Agenda. Last year, in this very Hall, Pope Francis affirmed that

> "[t]his presupposes and requires the right to education ... which is ensured first and foremost by respecting and reinforcing the primary right of the family to educate its children, as well as the right of churches and social groups to support and assist families in the education of their boys and girls.
>
> "[f]or all this, the simplest and best measure and indicator of the implementation of the new agenda for development will be effective, practical and immediate access, on the part of all, to essential material and spiritual goods: housing, dignified and properly remunerated employment, adequate food and drinking water, religious freedom and, more generally, spiritual freedom and education" (*supra*, p. 4).

Such a process of bringing about integral human development — a concept that includes but is not exhausted by economic development — should, through multilateral initiatives, stimulate also the quest for complementary, alternative finance systems capable of ensuring that financial resources are both accessible to and sustainable for the poorest.

As Pope Francis said here last year,

> "[the] pillars of integral human development have a common foundation, which is the right to life," (*ibid.*, p. 4)

and we are required to

> "recognize a moral law written into human nature itself, which includes the natural difference between man and woman and an absolute respect for life in all its stages and dimensions" (*ibid.*, p. 5).

Moreover, integral human development is impossible without peace. Only two days ago in Assisi, Pope Francis, together with numerous other world religious leaders, stressed the importance of dialogue as a privileged way to becoming peacemakers. Conflicts not only render the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level absolutely impossible, but also destroy so many human resources, means of production and cultural heritage. Today, as during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, there is the recurrence of the threat of nuclear conflict with its terrible consequences.

The enormous and ill-fated effect of war is a downward spiral from which there is often no escape. It triggers increased political polarization at the global level and narrows the spaces in which the same international community can propose effective solutions for a stable and lasting peace.

Among the factors that degrade social coexistence in countries and undermine the whole international community we must count the scourge of terrorism. In the course of recent years we have seen terrorism metastasize to so many parts of the world. Neighbours of Syria and Iraq have increasingly become the victims of innumerable barbaric acts. Beyond the Middle East, atrocious acts of terrorism have introduced fear into the daily lives of so many across the globe.

In the Middle East we see the terrible consequences of the spiral of war: many lives destroyed, failed States, collapsed ceasefires, unsuccessful peace initiatives and failed attempts to resolve the fundamental causes of conflict in Syria, Iraq and Libya, find a solution to the presidency crisis in Lebanon, or resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That persistent failure has dampened the hopes and promises of all who consider the region sacred and holy.

We can also witness those failures in the long-standing conflicts that continue to oppress and take the lives of so many in South Sudan, the Great Lakes and for two and half years now in eastern Ukraine. Although those situations have all been high-profile and have led to an immense amount of human suffering, we remain very far from resolving the root causes. It almost seems that we have accepted conflict, war and terrorism as a part of normal life.

Beyond the urgency of the need for ceasefires, respect for the dignity and the rights of affected peoples and access to humanitarian aid, it is also necessary to facilitate negotiation among those with direct or indirect responsibility for particular conflicts. Thankful for the positive outcome in Colombia, the heartfelt hope of the Holy See is that, through facilitation efforts on the part of the international community, various forms of contact and dialogue will be pursued to resolve ongoing conflicts.

In particular, from the beginning of the conflict in Syria, the Holy See has invited all of the parties to dialogue and the international community to spare no effort in facilitating an end to violence and in promoting conditions conducive to a dialogue aimed at finding a political solution. Syria, however, has been overrun by all kinds of armed groups. The uproar of arms must cease so that peace may stand a chance and, above all, so that humanitarian assistance may be brought to those most in need. The Holy See is convinced that this is possible, provided that there is the political will to bring an end to the fighting.

Despite the present difficulties, one can still gratefully find in Lebanon the conviction that common good requires the participation and cooperation of all sectors of society, based on the rule of law and the idea that institutions are founded on respect for the innate dignity of every human being. The Lebanese constitutional arrangement, in which diverse ethnic groups, cultures and religions are an asset and contribute to a peaceful coexistence, can also be a model for a political solution in the region.

The Holy See also believes that in the Middle East a renewed commitment in favour of the rule of law and the freedom of religion and of conscience is the most effective way to safeguard the dignity of all. In that context, the 2015 global agreement signed by the Holy See and Palestine, which was subsequently ratified by both parties, sets out in law defence of the most basic human rights, among which are freedom of religion, the right to peaceful assembly and the freedom to publicly profess one's religious beliefs. In the complex situation of the Middle East, in particular in Iraq and Syria, the Holy See maintains that the global agreement with Palestine can serve as a template for other countries with analogous social structures.

In the context of the renewed efforts to relaunch the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians, the Holy See renews its appeal to both parties to abstain from any unilateral or illegal measures whatsoever, which may constitute an obstacle to the search for peace and advancing the two-State solution.

When we look at the phenomenon of forced migration, we find ourselves before a population of people on the move greater than that of many of the States represented here: 65 million people have been compelled to flee from their homes and communities because of persecution, conflict, widespread violence and hunger, and devastated lands. A word of praise must go to Lebanon and to Jordan for the hospitality they are offering to all who have escaped from war and destruction in Iraq and Syria, as well as to Turkey, which is hosting millions of Syrian refugees.

Beyond the necessary urgent consideration of how to resolve the causes of that forced exodus, we must note that migration and development are tightly linked. The consequences of the mass movement of refugees and migrants threaten to weaken our commitment to the values of solidarity and hospitality towards those in need. Those values stand at the heart of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy to which Pope Francis has been summoning the world. As Pope Francis has emphasized,

> "[m]ercy is the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life",

especially those who are the weakest and most vulnerable. Drawing special attention to those who are in prison, the Pope has renewed his pressing appeal

> "to the consciences of leaders, that they come to an international consensus aimed at abolishing the death penalty".

Without authentic and absolute respect for life, there can be no development that is truly human, integral and sustainable. Precisely to foster that development, Pope Francis has instituted a new dicastery, or department, of the Holy See, the purpose of which is to promote justice, peace, the safeguarding of the environment and care of those most in need. The poor and needy are the human face of sustainable development that we wish to keep ever before us, so that we may become responsible agents of a more just and truly human society.

The meeting rose at 2.50 p.m.